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Priscilla A. Hayden-Roy

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, phayden-roy1@unlnotes.unl.edu

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## Refining the Metaphor in Lessing's *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*

PRISCILLA HAYDEN-ROY  
*University of Nebraska*

Lessing's *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (*EdM*) first appeared, albeit in incomplete form, appended to the fourth of Lessing's *Gegensätze zu Reimarus* in 1777. It constitutes part of Lessing's response to the rationalistic polemic Lessing's "Ungenannter," Hermann Samuel Reimarus, directed against many of the fundamental dogmas of orthodox Christianity, and seeks to define a position which preserves the authority of reason, while at the same time defining a legitimate historical role for revealed religion. I wish to investigate here the hermeneutical model Lessing puts forward in the *EdM* in the context of his response to Reimarus. We will see that while Lessing defines a progressive and teleological framework for his hermeneutics in contrast to Reimarus' static model, he nevertheless agrees with Reimarus that an interpretation which projects more into the words than they can contain is to be rejected. In other words, Lessing puts forward a hermeneutical model which requires that the interpretation of the Bible change over time (in opposition to Reimarus), but sets limits to this process using arguments similar to those Reimarus employs in his criticism of the allegorical Scriptural exegesis practiced by certain Jewish sects after the Babylonian Captivity.<sup>1</sup> We will also consider here the sources Lessing drew upon, in particular Wolffian semiotics, in order to explain the reasoning behind both the dynamic flexibility and the restrictions characteristic of the hermeneutical model Lessing employs in the *EdM*.

But first, a brief review of the publishing history of the *EdM* in the context of the *Fragmentenstreit*. Under what conditions Lessing received a copy of Reimarus' "Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes" is unknown, but probably the manuscript came through either Elise or Johann Albert Heinrich Reimarus, the author's children, following the death of their father in 1768. Lessing explored the possibility of publishing the entire manuscript with Christian Friedrich Voss in Berlin in 1771, but had to abandon this plan when the theological censure in Berlin refused to give its imprimatur.<sup>2</sup> Determined nevertheless to see Reimarus' work into print, Lessing decided to publish parts of it in his own journal, the *Beiträge zur Geschichte*

und *Litteratur aus der Herzoglichen Bibliothek zu Wolfenbüttel*, which he had founded as an organ for publishing interesting finds unearthed in his work as Ducal Librarian in Wolfenbüttel. Of course in this case the journal served as a subterfuge to obscure the true source of the manuscript, and also to evade the censure, since the journal was not subject to censorial scrutiny (*WuB* 8:888). The first "Fragment eines Ungenannten," which Lessing entitled "Von Duldung der Deisten," appeared in 1774 in the third volume of the *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Litteratur*. In his brief foreword Lessing throws out numerous false leads regarding the manuscript's author: Lessing was unable to determine when or how the manuscript came to the library, but perhaps its author was "Schmid" (Johann Lorenz Schmidt), translator of the controversial Wertheim Bible, who had lived in Wolfenbüttel from 1747 until his death in 1749 (*WuB* 8:116, see also notes on Schmidt, *WuB* 8:861). *Von Duldung der Deisten* created no stir among the reading public; reviews were few in number and benign in their assessment (*WuB* 8:856–7). In 1777 Lessing published five further *Fragmente* in the next volume of the *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Litteratur*, and to these he appended his five *Gegensätze zu Reimarus*, which offer critical responses to each of the five *Fragmente*. The fourth *Gegensatz*, to which the first 53 paragraphs of the *EdM* were appended, responds to the fourth *Fragment*, entitled "Daß die Bücher A.T. nicht geschrieben worden, eine Religion zu offenbaren" (*WuB* 8:246–277). In the fourth *Gegensatz* Lessing once again is concerned to cover up authorship, this time of his own text, the *EdM*. Neither here nor in the 1780, complete edition, does Lessing disclose himself as the text's author. In the fourth *Gegensatz* Lessing states merely that the text had been circulating "[u]nter einem gewissen Zirkel von Freunden" (*WuB* 8:332), and that since he had made liberal use of its thoughts in the fourth *Gegensatz*, this would be a good opportunity to publish the first part of the text. These first 53 paragraphs discuss the shift in thinking among the ancient Hebrews, and thus bear directly on Reimarus' discussion in the fourth *Fragment*, while the latter half, which treats the progression of revealed religion through Christianity and beyond, clearly went beyond the scope of the fourth *Fragment*. In the wake of the *Fragmentenstreit* that erupted following the publication of the five *Fragmente* in 1777, Lessing was subjected to increasingly tighter restrictions of his publishing activity. On July 6, 1778 the Duke of Braunschweig, Lessing's prince and employer, forbade further publication of the *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Litteratur*. On July 13th Lessing was ordered to stop publishing his *Anti-Goeze*. On August 3rd, after having published yet another response to Goeze in Berlin and Hamburg, Lessing was forbidden to publish any further contributions to the *Fragmentenstreit* outside Braunschweig's borders without permission of the Braunschweig government.<sup>3</sup> While the flood of polemical tracts came to an end, Lessing nevertheless published two more works centrally related to the *Fragmentenstreit*, *Nathan der Weise* in 1779, and the complete *EdM* in 1780. And now let us turn

to Reimarus' fourth *Fragment* and Lessing's response to it in his fourth *Gegensatz* and in the first 53 paragraphs of the *EdM*.

Reimarus' fourth *Fragment* begins with a list of three doctrines that he maintains must be taught by every "seligmachende Religion": the immortality of the soul, the reward or punishment of our actions in an eternal afterlife, and the union of devout souls with god in ever greater beatitude (*WuB* 8:246–247). Reimarus argues that the writers of the Old Testament (OT) neither understood nor taught these doctrines; indeed, they denied them outright. Having posited these required doctrines, it then follows that faith based on the OT cannot constitute a "seligmachende Religion," but only, as he states, a "schlechte und niederträchtige Religion, welche kaum mehr den Schein einer Religion behaupten kann" (*WuB* 8:247). It should be evident to every reader of the OT that these key doctrines are missing, argues Reimarus, but readers tend to project concepts they have learned from other sources, especially the New Testament (NT), into the OT text. They fail to see the originally intended meaning, because their understanding is prejudiced by what they have learned elsewhere:

Wären die Menschen nicht gewohnt, mit den Begriffen, die sie einmal eingesogen, alles anzusehen, und das, was sie in ihren Gedanken haben, in allen Dingen wahrzunehmen: so müßte diese Wahrheit, daß das alte Testament von keiner Unsterblichkeit und ewigen Leben weiß, allen einleuchten. Aber, wir lernen erst die Unsterblichkeit der Seelen, Himmel, Hölle und Auferstehung aus dem neuen Testamente oder Catechismo, und glauben, daß eben dasselbe auch im alten Testamente stehen müsse. Dann lesen wir das alte Testament in der Meinung und Absicht: so finden wir denn diese Sätze in vielen Stellen, zumal da uns die Wörter Himmel, Hölle, Geist und dergleichen, verleiten, zu gedenken, daß sich die Hebräer eben das dabei vorgestellt haben, was wir [. . .]" (*WuB* 8:258–259)

Reimarus dismisses interpretations based on projections of this sort as illegitimate; only the literal meaning intended by the author gives rise to a valid interpretation: "[W]ir [müssen] mit den Wörtern bloß diejenigen Begriffe verknüpfen, welche die alten Hebräer gehabt, nicht aber welche wir aus der christlichen Lehre geschöpft haben" (*WuB* 8:259). Reimarus is determined to "awaken" prejudiced readers from their "dream" (*WuB* 8:259) by discussing a series of OT passages traditionally thought to point to the immortality of the soul or to an eternal afterlife. Using philological and historical arguments, Reimarus demonstrates that this is not the case, and thus concludes that the OT cannot be a book of divine revelation.

Lessing is concerned in his fourth *Gegensatz* to point out the lack of historical perspective in Reimarus' *Fragment*. Because the limits of human understanding change over time, so must the dimensions of revealed religion. A "seligmachende Religion" must be defined not in terms of static, unchanging concepts, but in terms of the limits of the minds of those practicing a religion

at any given time. Religious books lacking explicit teachings on the doctrines Reimarus deems essential for a "seligmachende Religion" may nevertheless contain a such a religion:

Diese Bücher können sogar eine seligmachende Religion enthalten; das ist, eine Religion, bei deren Befolgung sich der Mensch seiner Glückseligkeit so weit versichert halten kann, *als er hinausdenkt*. Denn warum dürfte eine solche Religion sich nicht *nach den Grenzen seiner Sehnsucht und Wünsche fügen?* (*WuB* 8:331; my emphasis)

The teachings of a "seligmachende Religion" must be comprehensible to its practitioners, which means that at different times, as the nature of human comprehension changes, so too must the content of their religious concepts. Lessing is willing to grant that "das Seligmachende" in different religions is always the same: god wishes to bless people for the same reasons, and in the same manner. But the concepts by which people grasp this revelation change: "darum [müssen] nicht immer die Menschen *den nemlichen Begriff* damit . . . verbunden haben" (*WuB* 8:332).

Because Lessing understands that religious concepts must and will change over time, he can step around Reimarus' contention that concepts essential for a "seligmachende Religion" are lacking in the OT. He is willing to concede at the beginning of his fourth *Fragment* that the OT does not teach the immortality of the soul (*WuB* 8:328). Indeed Lessing goes a step further and maintains that in all likelihood the Israelite people did not even fully grasp the concept of the one god ("die Einheit Gottes", *WuB* 8:329) prior to the Babylonian Captivity. In the *EdM* Lessing explains this development in more detail. Prior to the Captivity the Israelites understood Jehova to be a national god, the mightiest, but not the *only* god. But through the influence of the "geübtere Vernunft" of the Persians, the Israelites began to measure their god against a notion of the "Wesen aller Wesen" (§35), and came thereby to an understanding of god "erweitert, veredelt, berichtiget" through reason (§34). Convinced of the superiority of their captors' religious views, writes Lessing, the Israelites sought to find the blame for their own ignorance in their Scriptures, or "primer" (*Elementarbuch*). But they found on closer analysis that the blame rested with themselves: the concepts they had been drawing from the Bible were coarse and inadequate, but the book itself was not at fault. Indeed now they found that these very Scriptures told them to *avoid* all "sinnliche Vorstellungen" of god (§39).

But was this message properly contained in the original text? In the fourth *Gegensatz* Lessing makes a distinction between the writers of the texts, whom he considers to be "einzelne erleuchtete Seelen" who could have had a "higher" understanding of the one god, and the Israelite people themselves, who, by repeatedly turning from their faith in Jehova to worship one of their neighbors' gods, demonstrated that they understood their god to be one among many:

Man behaupte, das A.T. oder doch das Israelitische Volk, wie wir es in den Schriften des A.T. vor den Zeiten der Babylonischen Gefangenschaft kennen lernen, habe nicht einmal den wahren Begriff von der Einheit Gottes gehabt. Wenn man das Volk meinet, und einzelne erleuchteter Seelen, dergleichen die heiligen Schriftsteller selbst waren, davon ausnimmt: so kann auch diese Behauptung zu einem hohen Grade von Wahrscheinlichkeit getrieben werden. (*WuB* 8:328–329)

Perhaps the message was properly contained in the text, insofar as its enlightened author understood it, but in any case the text initially was interpreted by the people in terms of their coarse understanding. Lessing is not concerned to fix a single proper, static meaning to the text, as was Reimarus, but rather focuses on the text's hermeneutical flexibility, its ability to yield new interpretations. In the fourth *Gegensatz* he writes: "als es [das israelitische Volk] sahe, wie viel große unerkannte Wahrheiten in diesen Schriften lagen, oder sich hineinlegen ließen [. . .] ward es ein ganz andres Volk, und alle Abgötterei hörte unter ihm auf" (*WuB* 8:330; my emphasis). With this "oder" Lessing circumvents Reimarus' question of the proper meaning intended by the author. He looks rather to the historical development of new interpretations among the Israelites. Here he finds their understanding of god changed because their concepts were "refined": "Wenn diese plötzliche Veränderung, die kein Mensch leugnen kann, nicht durch den veredelten Begriff zu erklären, den es sich nun von seinem eignen Gotte machte: so ist sie durch nichts zu erklären" (*WuB* 8:330). Moreover Scripture, their *Elementarbuch*, presented no obstacle in this change. Reimarus asked if the doctrines required of a "seligmachende Religion" were to be found in the OT; his answer was no. Lessing answers the same question with a yes and no: "die Lehre von der Einheit Gottes [. . .] welche in den Büchern des A.T. sich findet, und sich nicht findet" (§22). This paradoxical formulation embraces the hermeneutical flexibility Lessing wishes to find in the Biblical *Elementarbuch*: over time Biblical language will yield new, progressively refined interpretations. Later Lessing will make a similarly ambiguous observation in the second half of the *EdM* regarding the progress of NT exegesis:

Sie [die neutestamentlichen Schriften] haben seit siebzehnhundert Jahren den menschlichen Verstand mehr als alle andere Bücher beschäftigt; mehr als alle andere Bücher erleuchtet, sollte es auch nur das Licht sein, welches der menschliche Verstand selbst hineintrug. (§65, my emphasis)

Whether the enlightening exegesis can properly be ascribed to the text, based on the philological tools at the scholar's disposal, receives the same ambiguous answer from Lessing; he prefers to leave the question open. And whereas Reimarus considered an interpretation based on the projection of concepts learned elsewhere into the Biblical text to be illegitimate, for Lessing this process of projecting new meanings into the text is not only legitimate, but char-

acteristic of the progressive hermeneutical model he develops in the *EdM*. Is there a specific quality Lessing saw in the Biblical texts themselves which makes them more suited to receiving new, refined meanings?

Two characteristics of the texts of revealed religion make them particularly susceptible to the process of exegetical refinement: that they are historical accounts, and that their language is poetic. Let us first consider how Lessing understood historical accounts to lend themselves to this process. The problem of historical accounts as the basis for revelation is of pivotal importance in Reimarus' *Fragmente*, in Lessing's response in the *Gegensätze* and the *EdM*, and in the *Fragmentenstreit* that followed their publication. Again it is instructive to see how Lessing responds to the position Reimarus initially defined in the *Fragmente*. In his second *Fragment* Reimarus contends that historical accounts must be judged "nach den Regeln einer glaubwürdigen Geschichte" (*WuB* 8:231). A necessary criterion for consideration as a foundation for divine revelation is their credibility, their lack of error:

Eine einzige Unwahrheit, die wider die klare Erfahrung, wider die Geschichte, wider die gesunde Vernunft, wider unleugbare Grund-Sätze, wider die Regeln guter Sitten läuft, ist genug, ein Buch als eine göttliche Offenbarung zu verwerfen. (*WuB* 8:231)

Reimarus' demonstration of the contradictions in the accounts of the parting of the Red Sea (third *Fragment*) and of the resurrection (fifth *Fragment*) serves just this disqualifying purpose. But while the criterion of historical accuracy is necessary, it is not by itself sufficient: "Demnach geben alle die obigen Betrachtungen [concerning the reliability of the account] bloß solche Kennzeichen, daraus man die Sache wohl verneinen, aber nicht bejahen kann" (*WuB* 8:231). Historical accuracy alone does not suffice, because not every historical account, assuming it were accurate, qualifies for this reason as divine revelation. In the course of his discussion, however, it becomes evident that no historical account can fulfill the qualification required of divine revelation. One fundamental problem, notes Reimarus in the second *Fragment*, is that historical accounts, when passed down from generation to generation, tend not to retain their credibility:

Wie viel muß nicht ferner in so manchen Jahrhunderten die Glaubwürdigkeit abnehmen: wenn einer, der dergleichen zu seiner Zeit von einem andern für wahr hält, solches seinen Kindern, die Kinder wieder seinen Enkeln, die Enkel seinen Urenkeln, und so weiter, erzählen? Da wird aus der allergrößten Glaubwürdigkeit eine Wahrscheinlichkeit, dann eine Sage, und zuletzt ein Märlein. (*WuB* 8:193)

The distance of time between the historical account and the reader tends to make the account increasingly less credible, and to drift increasingly into the realm of fiction.

But Reimarus' rejection of historical accounts ultimately rests on his re-

jection of the notion of special revelation (acts of divine intervention, miracles, divinely inspired books) as a basis for true religion. Because revealed religion is mediated through language, and given to specific people at specific times, it fails to meet his requirement of universality. Barriers of language, intellectual development, origin, etc., must always prevent some people from receiving revelation as mediated through language and books. Reimarus concludes that only through a non-linguistic medium, the language of nature, can divine truths be communicated universally:

Es bleibt der einzige Weg, dadurch etwas allgemein werden kann, die Sprache und das Buch der Natur, die Geschöpfe Gottes, und die Spuren der göttlichen Vollkommenheiten, welche darin als in einem Spiegel allen Menschen, so gelehrt als ungelehrt, so Barbaren als Griechen, Juden und Christen, aller Orten und zu allen Zeiten, sich deutlich darstellen. (*WuB* 8:235)

Lessing's skepticism regarding historical accounts is also related to the mediacy of language, but unlike Reimarus, he does not wish to avoid the problem of mediacy with a natural theology, nor does he dismiss the notion of revelation. In "Über den Beweis des Geistes und die Kraft" (1777) Lessing articulates the problem of the mediacy of historical accounts as he sees it.<sup>4</sup> Had he himself experienced the miracles wrought by Christ and his followers immediately, Lessing writes, he would have "willig meinen Verstand dem Seinen unterworfen" (*WuB* 8:439), and espoused belief in him. But when the account is interposed between the event and the recipient, i.e. when the event becomes an historical truth rather than a directly experienced event, it loses its power to convict: "die Nachrichten von erfüllten Weissagungen und Wundern sollen durch ein Medium wirken, das ihnen alle Kraft benimmt" (*WuB* 8:440). Moreover, objects Lessing, to infer from historical truths a "completely different class" of truths, namely ethical and metaphysical truths, would constitute a logical error, a "metabasis eis allo genos," or "crossing over to another kind."<sup>5</sup> Historical truths cannot be the foundation of rational truths: "[Z]ufällige Geschichtswahrheiten können der Beweis von notwendigen Vernunftswahrheiten nie werden" (*WuB* 8:441).

But Lessing does not therefore reject language as the medium of revelation, as Reimarus did. Rather he focuses on the *rhetorical impact* of linguistically mediated historical accounts, and places this in the service of revelation. Stated baldly, when read as a fable, as fiction, the Bible has more power to convince than when read as an historical account. Before discussing this thesis in the context of the *EdM*, let us first turn to an earlier work, Lessing's "Abhandlung über die Fabel" (1759), where Lessing had already considered a similar problem, the rhetorical efficacy of the fable vs. the historical example. In this text he disputes Aristotle's claim that historical examples have more power to convince than fables (*WuB* 4:375). He argues that if the recipient has not experienced the event himself, then only the "innere Wahrscheinlichkeit" of the



account, i.e. the degree to which the account accords with what the recipient knows about the world, will convince him of its truth. But at this point the historical account no longer is judged according to its correspondence to the actual event (an impossibility, since the event lies in the past), but according to the same standard as a fictional text: does the story make sense, does it seem plausible? In terms of its ability to convince the reader, the historical account now competes on equal footing with fiction:

Da also einzig und allein die innere Wahrscheinlichkeit mich die ehemalige Wirklichkeit eines Falles glauben macht, und diese innere Wahrscheinlichkeit sich eben so wohl in einem erdichteten Falle finden kann: was kann die Wirklichkeit des erstern für eine größere Kraft auf meine Überzeugung haben, als die Wirklichkeit des andern? (*WuB* 4:375)<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, Lessing goes one step further and suggests that the fable even has some advantages over the historical example, insofar as its author can shape the narrative of the event with its rhetorical impact in mind, whereas the author of the historical example is restricted by the historical events themselves, which frequently are, in the mind of the recipient, unlikely, and therefore incredible (*WuB* 4:375–6). When considered in terms of the narrative's power to convince the recipient, the fable offers advantages over the historical example.

This insight bears directly on Lessing's approach to Biblical exegesis in the *Gegensätze* and the *EdM*. Here we see that Lessing suspends the question of the historical veracity of the Biblical account, and points alternatively to the possibility of reading the Bible as a poetic text. For example, in the first *Gegensatz*, Lessing notes that the Genesis account of original sin relates "entweder die erste traurige Erfahrung, oder erteilet das schicklichste Beispiel" of the power of sensual desires. "Factum oder Allegorie," he continues, "in dieser Macht allein liegt die Quelle aller unserer Vergehungen" (*WuB* 8:317). Whether we are dealing with fact or allegory is immaterial. Both are accounts, literary media, and as such are equally able to convince the reader. If the account of original sin is invented, then felicitously so, says Lessing, offering "das schicklichste Beispiel." As fiction it is equally capable of mediating a message, regardless of whether the reader reads the account as historical or as a "Märlein." For those more distanced from the account their ability to read the text as an allegory even facilitates understanding, since the question of historical veracity no longer casts doubt on the reliability of the account. Nor is this reader forced to commit the error of *metabasis*, since fiction does not pretend to "prove" rational truths with an appeal to historical veracity.

In the *EdM* Lessing enlarges on this theme when discussing how abstract concepts can be intimated in the "coarse" language of the Bible. Abstract concepts are cloaked (*eingekleidet*) in "Allegorien und lehrreiche einzelne Fälle, die als wirklich geschehen erzählt werden" (§48). For example, the story of the forbidden fruit in Genesis presents an abstract concept—the cause of moral

evil—as an historical account. At a certain point, when the events, should they ever have occurred, have receded to the point where they can neither be proved nor disproved, the account inevitably drifts to allegory. But precisely because it *can* drift, it can retain its rhetorical effectiveness, even if lacking a claim to historical veracity.

Thus historical accounts, because they tend to drift towards allegory, are peculiarly well-suited for the *Elementarbuch* of revelation. The more coarse understanding is generally also chronologically closest to the historical event and thus receives revelation immediately, as a concrete, specific event. With time the historical account loses its immediacy. But the cognitive level of its readers also eventually rises, so that they are able to read the account as a fable, “refining” it by extracting from it the abstract concept contained in (or projected into) it. The drift of Biblical texts from historical account to fable thus is not a reason for rejecting them, as Reimarus argued, but rather constitutes a necessary step in mediating rational truth: when read as fiction the Bible is more capable of yielding these higher truths than when read as an historical account.

Another characteristic of the Biblical *Elementarbuch* which is closely related to how its historical accounts tend to drift to allegory, is the text's semantic flexibility due to its metaphorical or poetic nature. Revelation is metaphorical “Einkleidung” of truths which, at least at the historical moment when they are received as revealed truth, exceed the understanding of those receiving them. Lessing describes the ancient Hebrews as “coarse” (§11, 16, 18, 27), “unskilled in abstract thought” (*ungeschickt zu abgezogenen Gedanken*, §16), sensuous (*sinnlich*, §43). Only through exposure to the Persians did they come to reject all sensate representations of god (*sinnliche Vorstellungen*, §39) and embrace truths accessible only through exercising the reason. This cognitive development from sensate to rational cognition, of central importance to the entire *EdM*, itself is situated within the teleological framework of Wolffian semiotics. To summarize briefly, sensate representations, produced by the lower faculties of cognition, lie below the threshold of rational (also referred to as “symbolic”) cognition. Through a process of analysis, sensate representations become first clear (as opposed to obscure), then distinct (*deutlich*) as opposed to confused (*undeutlich, verworren*). The transition from clear to distinct representations marks the passage from intuition (*Anschauung*) into the realm of rational, symbolic cognition, and is facilitated through the use of signs (language), which arbitrarily fix representations for the purpose of recall and communication. Distinct representations fixed in the form of language are required for higher forms of thought such as abstraction, forming judgments, and syllogistic argumentation. This developmental model of cognition, which applies both to individual and cultural-historical development, itself rests in yet a larger, theological context. Rational cognition ultimately is measured against, and is to approximate divine knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

I would contend that Lessing's *EdM* on many levels draws on this Wolffian model, most broadly in its historical-philosophically conceived model of progressive cognition,<sup>8</sup> also in the nature of the cognitive development described, and finally in his conception of this cognitive development in terms of the transition from confused to distinct representations. In the first *Gegensatz* Lessing discusses the Genesis account of the fall using terminology drawn from this Wolffian model:

Mit einem Worte; die Macht unsrer *sinnlichen* Begierden, unsrer *dunklen Vorstellungen* über alle noch so *deutliche Erkenntnis* ist es, welche zur kräftigsten Anschauung darin gebracht wird. (*WuB* 8:317, my emphasis)

The problem of original sin is conceived not in theological, but in cognitive terms: obscure representations hold sway over distinct knowledge. The shortcomings of the ancient Hebrews in the *EdM* are also of a cognitive nature: they are unskilled in abstract thought (§16).

Lessing is also drawing here on the context of aesthetic philosophy based on Wolff, first formulated by Baumgarten in his *Aesthetica* (1750–58), but elaborated upon extensively by Lessing's contemporaries (for example Georg Friedrich Meier and Moses Mendelssohn), and by himself. The aesthetic philosophy produced by these thinkers operated within the Wolffian "representational theory-type,"<sup>9</sup> but focused increasingly on the cognitive advantages to be found in sensate representations and sensate cognition. Sensate representations, precisely because they are unanalyzed and therefore not yet precise and discrete, are understood to have the advantage of richness of meaning, what David Wellbery has called "contentual repleteness."<sup>10</sup> I would argue that in the *EdM* this notion of the contentual repleteness of sensate representations informs Lessing's understanding of how cognitive progress can occur through an engagement with the images and historical accounts of the Bible. On the one hand the coarser, sensate cognition is able to grasp the text as a representation of something sensate. But because the image itself is rich with meaning, it engages the person and encourages him to explore the plethora of meanings within the image, and so leads him to higher forms of thought, eventually to the point where he can comprehend the image as a metaphor pointing to an abstract, non-sensate truth. Herein lies what Lessing refers to the "positive perfection" (§47) of the Bible as a good primer.

In the *EdM* Lessing sets forth a series of rhetorical and stylistic characteristics of the OT, which in each case encourages the reader to initiate the process of conceptual refinement by thinking beyond the literal meaning of the text. The reader interprets the OT as a poetic or metaphorical text, and by exploring the many possible meanings its stories and images could signify, eventually comes to the "refined" rational truth that Lessing understood to be its hermeneutical telos of the text. For example Lessing refers to "preliminary exercises" (*Vorübungen*, §43), such as the formulaic expression that god would punish the children for the iniquities of the parent to the third and fourth gen-

erations. Such an expression prods the understanding to think of the consequences of one's action after one's death, the first step in conceiving the immortality of the soul. An "allusion" (*Anspielung*, §45) stimulates one's curiosity, raises a question regarding the real meaning behind the expression. For example, the OT expression that the dead were "gathered unto their forefathers" can point beyond the concrete meaning (they were buried with the bones of their ancestors) to a metaphorical signification, an allusion to an eternal afterlife. Lessing's definition of a "sign" (*Fingerzeig*, §46) lends particular emphasis to the developmental process whereby a more abstract meaning emerges from a concept originally understood in concrete terms: "Einen *Fingerzeig* nenne ich, was schon irgend einen Keim enthält, aus welchem sich die noch zurückgehaltne Wahrheit entwickeln läßt" (§46). We discussed above how historical accounts come to be understood to signify abstract concepts; Lessing refers to this device as "cloaking" (*Einkleidung*, §48), again suggesting how a true, rational meaning emerges through the shedding of external, sensate meaning. Finally Lessing discusses the OT's style as "bald plan und einfältig, bald poetisch, durchaus voll Tautologien, aber solchen, die den Scharfsinn üben, indem sie bald etwas anders zu sagen scheinen, und doch das nemliche sagen, bald das nemliche zu sagen scheinen, und im Grunde etwas anders bedeuten oder bedeuten können" (§49). Here again we see the "contentual repleteness" of metaphorical, poetic language: precisely because it does not operate with logical, distinct concepts, precisely because its language opens up to a range of meanings, it facilitates the growth and development of a childlike understanding into the adulthood of rationality, as a good primer should.

The process of refining the metaphorical language of Scripture is not limited to the OT, nor is it yet completed, according to Lessing. In the second half of the *EdM* (1780) Lessing addresses how the process he described in the first 53 paragraphs can be applied to the NT. Thus he asks concerning NT exegesis: "könnten in diesem [NT] nicht noch mehr dergleichen Wahrheiten vorgespiegelt werden, die wir als Offenbarungen so lange anstaunen sollen, bis sie die Vernunft aus ihren andern ausgemachten Wahrheiten herleiten und mit ihnen verbinden lernen?" (§72). In the concluding paragraphs of the 1780 edition of the *EdM* Lessing offers tentative, hypothetical suggestions for how a refining exegesis might proceed. Perhaps the NT doctrine of the "eternally begotten son of god" could be a coarse metaphor for the philosophical concept of self-reflecting transcendental unity. Perhaps the *satisfactio* doctrine should be understood as god's willingness to give humankind a moral law, despite their moral weakness, and to forgive all violations of this law in consideration of his son, i.e. in consideration of the "selbständigen Umfang aller seiner Vollkommenheiten, gegen den und in dem jede Unvollkommenheit des Einzelnen verschwindet" (§75).

Lessing puts forward these interpretations as non-binding suggestions, because at this juncture in history the poetic language in question still is indistinct, its rational meaning not yet wholly comprehensible to the reason. As

a good *Elementarbuch* the Bible is receptive to the interpretive possibility of rational truths, and in the process of time these truths establish themselves as universal. Lessing (or more precisely the “fictive” author of the *EdM*) tentatively assumes here the role of one of the “privileged souls” of history, who by means of a more highly developed faculty of reason, are able to see the “greater light” more clearly than their contemporaries (*WuB* 8:331). The subjectivity and emotionality of the concluding paragraphs underscore Lessing’s determination not to dogmatize, his intention to keep these speculative, hypothetical interpretations in the realm of possibility, not necessity. But it is his understanding of the polysemic richness of metaphorical, sensate language that allows him to assume this role in the first place. This model of hermeneutical development and change stands in sharp contrast to Reimarus’ views, for whom the persistent existence of competing interpretations of Scripture constitutes one of the most important reasons for rejecting these same Scriptures as the basis of a universal religion for humankind. The mediacy of language in general, and the problems associated with it, lead Reimarus finally to reject revelation through the written text as an appropriate means for god to communicate the “Mittel der Seligkeit” (*WuB* 8:235) to humankind. Univocal signs, he believes, are to be found only in a non-linguistic medium: “Es bleibt der einzige Weg, dadurch etwas allgemein werden kann, die Sprache und das Buch der Natur” (*WuB* 8:235). Lessing, on the other hand, constructs his hermeneutics on the principle of the linguistic mediacy of the Biblical text, and then exploits its ability to generate multiple meanings (the very quality that led Reimarus to reject it) in order to formulate a notion of evolving, progressive interpretation.

But the polysemic nature of the poetic, metaphorical language of the Biblical *Elementarbuch* is not an end in itself for Lessing, but rather facilitates the progression towards rational thought. Once this goal is reached, the *Elementarbuch* has served its purpose. It is time to move on to the next level of revelation (in the case of the OT, this was the teaching of the “better pedagogue,” Christ). At this point persistent and exclusive engagement with the old *Elementarbuch* can be detrimental, argues Lessing:

Aber jedes Elementarbuch ist nur für ein gewisses Alter. Das ihm entwachsene Kind länger, als die Meinung gewesen, dabei zu verweilen, ist schädlich. Denn um dieses auf eine nur einigermaßen nützliche Art tun zu können, muß man mehr hineinlegen, als darin liegt; mehr hineintragen, als es fassen kann. Man muß der Anspielungen und Fingerzeige zu viel suchen und machen, die Allegorien zu genau ausschütteln, die Beispiele zu umständlich deuten, die Worte zu stark pressen. Das giebt dem Kinde einen kleinlichen, schiefen, spitzfindigen Verstand; das macht es geheimnisreich, abergläubisch, voll Verachtung gegen alles Fäbliche und Leichte. (§51, my emphasis)

As we have seen, Lessing grants Biblical exegesis considerable flexibility, allowing “refined” concepts to supplant the coarser interpretations of earlier

readers. But at the point where allegorizing becomes forced, says Lessing, where “more is being projected into the words than they can contain,” at that point the *Elementarbuch* becomes passé. Lessing is referring here to rabbinic commentaries of the Torah (§52), which Lessing and many of his Enlightened contemporaries felt were fanciful, forced, or obscure. In the fifth *Fragment* Reimarus argues similarly that after the Babylonian Captivity the tendency existed to varying degrees among the Jewish sects to bring new doctrines into accord with the Hebrew Scriptures: “[sie] erfunden [. . .] eine Art allegorischer, mystischer, symbolischer, ja cabbalistischer Auslegung der Schrift, welches eine Kunst ist, aus allen alles zu machen, und aus der Schrift zu beweisen, was man nur will” (*WuB* 8:275). Reimarus disallows this sort of interpretation, as we have seen above, because by projecting a later concept into the text it distorts the text’s proper meaning. Lessing does not share Reimarus’ reason for rejecting this sort of interpretation. But he agrees with Reimarus that such an interpretation (where more is being projected into the words than they can contain) exists, and he, too, rejects it. His reason for rejecting it follows out of the progressive hermeneutical model underlying the *EdM*. Once a people reaches the stage where a certain body of rational truths is comprehensible as such, then it is no longer profitable for them to continue drawing these truths from their “Elementarbuch.” It is exhausted as a pedagogical tool, its metaphorical language has been refined by its readers, who now are to move on to the next revelatory dispensation, which, again, presents the reader with a new set of metaphorical images. Using these new images, the mind once again “exercises”<sup>11</sup> itself, and the process of education through exegetical refinement begins anew. The exegetical process remains the same, progress is constantly being won in the form of the rational concepts, the “Vernunftwahrheiten,” refined from metaphorical language over time through this exegetical process.

Can we speak here of a hermeneutical teleology that progressively devours the polysemy of metaphorical language, at the same time devouring the authority of revelation,<sup>12</sup> and whose telos is reached with the establishing of universal cognitive autonomy (when revelation has become obsolete) and universally non-metaphorical language? This is indeed the process Lessing puts forward as a hypothetical possibility in §72 of the *EdM*:

So wie wir zur Lehre von der Einheit Gottes nunmehr des Alten Testaments entbehren können; so wie wir allmählich, zur Lehre von der Unsterblichkeit der Seele, auch des Neuen Testaments entbehren zu können anfangen: könnten in diesem nicht noch mehr dergleichen Wahrheiten vorgespiegelt werden, die wir als Offenbarungen so lange anstaunen sollen, bis sie die Vernunft aus ihren andern ausgemachten Wahrheiten herleiten und mit ihnen verbinden lernen?

Certainly it would be difficult at first glance to reconcile the above envisioned progression towards human perfection with the familiar truth parable

in the *Duplik* (1778), where humankind's perfection is said to lie not in owning (or presuming to own), but in striving after truth (*WuB* 8:510). But on closer examination we find the two positions are not that far apart. In his forward to the 1780 edition of the *EdM*, Lessing imagines the author of the *EdM* standing on a hill, a place of elevated vision "von welchem er etwas mehr, als den vorgeschriebenen Weg seines heutigen Tages zu übersehen glaubt" (*WuB* 10:74). The claim is tentative; Lessing does not maintain in absolute terms that the author of the *EdM* perceives more than his contemporaries, but relativizes the authority of his vision with the verb "believes." We find similar hesitancy in the later paragraphs of the *EdM* itself. While the first paragraphs are delivered systematically and soberly, the tone in the concluding paragraphs becomes increasingly subjective, tentative, and emotional, as the narrator attempts a sketch of the future. Moreover his language is not characterized, as one might expect, by increasing clarity and abstraction of concepts as would mirror the linguistic goal he was describing, but turns itself increasingly to metaphor.<sup>13</sup> When facing the future, the author of the *EdM*, despite his slightly elevated position on the hill, has much the same cognitive limitation regarding truth as the narrator of the truth parable. He does not exhaustively know truth, indeed he cannot know how those still "cloaked" concepts of the NT ultimately will be uncovered by human reason. The process of unclinking, of refining metaphorical language into rational concepts, continues into the future, and the end point—universal cognitive autonomy, universally distinct, non-metaphorical language—withdraws to such an extent into the future ("Ist nicht die ganze Ewigkeit mein?" §100) that in practical terms human history will be occupied with the search for, rather than the possession of truth. And while truth presents itself to humankind in the form of fictions and metaphors, which with time are refined and become comprehensible in the form of rational truths, truth itself must be regarded as so replete with meaning as never to be wholly consumed by this process. Herein lies the continued legitimate role that parables, fictions, metaphorical language—what Goeze decried as Lessing's "Theaterlogik"—has to play in the process of the "education of humankind." Being ever refined (and rendered obsolete), poetic language exercises human cognition towards increasing rationality; but due to the nature of truth itself, whose repleteness is exhausted only in eternity, poetic language remains an abiding necessity.

### Concluding Remarks

Helmut Thielicke, by his own account, first brought to the fore the problem of Lessing's own position within the system of thought developed by the *EdM*, pointing out that Lessing did not place himself at the end of the development, in possession of ultimate truth, but rather within the process itself, as one for whom the goal lies "in 'unendlicher Ferne', wohl im Ahnen erfassbar, aber nicht

deutlich zu sehen."<sup>14</sup> With this insight Thielicke offers a helpful approach to the vexing problem of "exoteric" vs. "esoteric" language, subject of persistent wrangling among Lessing's interpreters: "Auch *er* [Lessing] ist noch im Warten und Fragen begriffen. Damit ist Lessing auch im eigenen Denken noch einem exoterischen Rest verfallen, dem erst eine ferne Zukunft beizukommen vermag (die ihm selbst nicht zur Verfügung steht)."<sup>15</sup> The relationship between the terms "exoteric" and "esoteric" parallels the relationship we have discussed above between metaphorical language and the rational truths one can refine from them. By understanding Lessing's position within, rather than beyond the process of human education, Thielicke is able to discuss how Lessing places himself cognitively (to the degree that ultimate truth withdraws from his grasp) *within* the confines of exoteric language, language still "cloaked" with metaphor. When facing imponderables, the human mind must avail itself of exoteric language, whose metaphors and fictions are able to signify a truth still not understood in terms of distinct concepts. A theological interpretation such as Thielicke's, which argues for the presence of transcendent truth as the source of revelation in the *EdM*, and a reading such as Thomas Althaus's, which argues that the "Eigentliche" or esoteric meaning of the *EdM* lies in its metaphoricity, its "uneigentliche" language, find agreement (despite all obvious differences) in their mutual recognition of Lessing's position within, rather than beyond, the process of the search for truth.<sup>16</sup>

At the beginning of his *Aesthetica* Baumgarten anticipates that some will object to his new science because it has "confused" representations as its object, as opposed to the distinct representations of the reason, by saying: "Confusio mater erroris." Baumgarten counters: "sed conditio, sine qua non, inveniendae veritatis, ubi natura non facit saltum ex obscuritate in distinctionem. Ex nocte per auroram meridies. [. . .] non commendatur confusio, sed cognitio emendatur, quatenus illi necessario admixtum est aliquid confusio-nis."<sup>17</sup> Aesthetics takes up its peculiar place on the path between the night of obscure representations and the day of distinct, rational representations; it is the science of cognitive twilight. In his foreword to the 1780 edition of the *EdM* Lessing avails himself of the same image of twilight: he imagines the author of the *EdM* gazing into the distance which "ein sanftes Abendrot seinem Blicke weder ganz verhüllt noch ganz entdeckt" (*WuB* 10:74). He, too, will avail himself of the aesthetic realm, of poetic, metaphorical language that is neither completely cloaked nor uncloaked, in describing the journey. And while the "journey," the "education," even the "enlightening" are metaphors, indeed, while the entire text remains intractably—and intentionally—dependent upon and confined within the realm of metaphorical language, this is not because of some fundamental skepticism regarding the existence or possibility of truth, but because the goal of truth withdraws from the comprehension of the one journeying towards this goal.

In considering the hermeneutical model employed by Lessing in the



*EdM* it is important to recall the philosophical context in which this model was developed. Both the flexibility of Lessing's model, as well as the teleological restrictions he placed upon it, have their roots in the cognitive model found in Wolff's semiotics, which then was applied to a philosophy of aesthetics by Baumgarten. To stress the metaphorical flux of Lessing's model to the exclusion of its rational telos, or vice versa, is to distort the model and to overlook the intellectual context in which it is embedded.

<sup>1</sup> See Reimarus' fourth *Fragment*. I will discuss this passage in more detail below. All citations of works by Lessing and Reimarus are taken from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*. Ed. Wilfried Barner et al. (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985–2001); cited here as *WuB*. See the reference to Reimarus' fourth *Fragment* in *WuB* 8:275. References to *EdM* are noted with paragraph number only; I have cited from the 1777 partial edition (*WuB* 8:333–346), rather than the complete 1780 edition (*WuB* 10:74–99), when discussing first 53 paragraphs.

<sup>2</sup> "Die theologische Censur wollte den Druck zwar weder verhindern, noch unterdrücken, aber doch nicht ihr 'vidi' darunter setzen, welches man einem christlichen Theologen auch nicht so übel nehmen kann. Der Verleger hielt sich aber dadurch gegen alle Verdrießlichkeit nicht genug gedeckt, und so nahm es mein Bruder wieder nach Wolfenbüttel, und schickte daraus die bösen Fragmente in die Welt." *WuB* 8:854, cited from Karl Lessing, *Gelehrter Briefwechsel zwischen Johann Jacob Reiske, Moses Mendelssohn und Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, Teil 1. (Berlin, 1789) 318–323.

<sup>3</sup> Wilfried Barner et al., *Lessing: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung*. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1987) 296–297.

<sup>4</sup> This work was written in response to Johann Daniel Schumann's "Über die Evidenz der Beweise für die Wahrheit der christlichen Religion" (1777), which itself argues for the veracity of the accounts of miracles in the NT.

<sup>5</sup> The notion is drawn from Aristotle, who disallows this form of argument in his *Posterior Analytics*, Bk. 1, Ch. 7. Lessing writes in "Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft": "Aber nun mit jener historischen Wahrheit in eine ganz andre Klasse von Wahrheiten herüber springen, und von mir verlangen, daß ich alle meine metaphysischen und moralischen Begriffe darnach umbilden soll [. . .]: wenn das nicht eine μεταβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος ist; so weiß ich nicht, was Aristoteles sonst unter dieser Benennung verstanden" (*WuB* 8:443).

<sup>6</sup> Dorothea von Mücke has made this same observation: "Alles, was nicht der eigenen sinnlichen Wahrnehmung zugänglich ist, sich nicht direkt verifizieren läßt, hängt von der jeweiligen Vermittlung ab. Die Faktizität wird historischen Ereignissen nach dem Grad ihrer Wahrscheinlichkeit zugestanden, d.h. eine historische Möglichkeit wird um so leichter als Ereignis aufgefaßt und geglaubt, je einfacher sie sich widerspruchlos in meinen eigenen Erfahrungs- und Anschauungsbereich integrieren läßt. Das Wahrheitskriterium für historische Aussagen ist damit aus dem Bereich der Korrespondenz in den der Kohärenz verschoben, und die Frage der Referenzialität ist vorläufig suspendiert. Aus dieser rhetorisch/psychologischen Perspektive rückt nun das historische Exempel in die Reihe fiktionaler Erzählungen" (cited with permission from her unpublished paper, "Kinderchen, liebt euch," delivered at the MMLA Conference, fall, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> David Wellbery writes regarding the theological dimensions of Christian Wolff's semiotics, "The fact that the intuition characteristic of God's knowledge is the immanent telos of human sign-use is made clear by the linguistic ideal of an *ars characteristicistica combinatoria*. [. . .] This fully perfected sign system [. . .] would be equivalent to the divinely instituted nexus of signs that nature itself is. *Through progressive semiosis nature is recovered in the form of a completely transparent language that is equivalent to divine cognition.*" David Wellbery, *Lessing's Laocoon: Semiotics and Aesthetics in the Age of Reason*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 40, 42.

<sup>8</sup> Wellbery cites Lessing's *EdM* as an example of how the Wolffian schematization of progressively refined representations is used as "a schema for progress in history." Wellbery, *Lessing's Laocoon* 13.

<sup>9</sup>At the center of Baumgarten's new science of aesthetics, for example, stands an investigation of sensate cognition and of sensate representations: "AESTHETICA [. . .] est scientia cognitionis sensitivae," and later, "COGNITIO SENSITIVA est a potiori desumpta denominatione complexus representationum infra distinctionem subsistentium." Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Theoretische Ästhetik: Die grundlegenden Abschnitte aus der "Aesthetica"* (1750/58). Philosophische Bibliothek 355. Ed. and tr. Hans Rudolf Schweizer. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988) 2, 4.

<sup>10</sup>Wellbery, *Lessing's Laocoon* 51–52.

<sup>11</sup>In §27 Lessing refers to the Israelite people as "im Denken ungeübt"; the Persians, on the other hand, possessed "eine geübtere Vernunft" (§35). The understanding, says Lessing, "will schlechterdings an geistigen Gegenständen geübt sein, wenn er zu seiner völligen Aufklärung gelangen [. . .] soll" (§80). This notion of "exercising" of course is part of the pedagogical metaphor that carries the entire text, and is also what a good "Elementarbuch" facilitates, here through the sensate language it employs.

<sup>12</sup>Norbert Altenhofer describes the moment when the idea of the immortality of the soul took shape as a "devouring" of the authority of revelation: "Der früheste Unsterblichkeitsgedanke, auf den der menschliche Verstand verfiel [. . .] kann von dem in jüdisch-christlicher Tradition gebildeten Bewußtsein erst in dem Augenblick assimiliert werden, da es sich die Autorität der Offenbarung gänzlich zu eigen gemacht, sie aufgezehrt hat." Norbert Altenhofer, *Poesie als Auslegung: Schriften zur Hermeneutik*. (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993) 164.

<sup>13</sup>Norbert Altenhofer has observed: "Dabei tritt keineswegs, wie es eine Logik der 'Ausbildung geoffenbarter Wahrheiten in Vernunftswahrheiten' (§76) verlangen würde, in jedem Falle abstrakte Begrifflichkeit an die Stelle personalisierender Bezeichnungen (wie in §84 'Natur' an die Stelle von 'Gott'); es werden umgekehrt auch terminologisch bereits abgeblanzt Bildern wie 'Vorsehung' wieder anschauliche Metaphern (§92: 'das große langsame Rad') substituiert, die eher dem Vorstellungskreis der 'Elementarbücher' anzugehören scheinen." Altenhofer, *Poesie als Auslegung* 162.

<sup>14</sup>Thielicke writes, "Aber steht Lessing wirklich am Ende dieser Entwicklung [vom Offenbarungs- zum Vernunftstadium]? Zwar befindet er sich—wie der 'Vorbericht des Herausgebers' in der 'Erz. D. M.' meldet—auf einem 'Hügel,' 'von welchem er etwas mehr als den vorgeschriebenen Weg seines heutigen Tages zu übersehen glaubt.' Aber damit steht er noch keineswegs am Ende der Entwicklung, sondern nur an hervorgehobenem Ort inmitten einer ihrer Phasen. Auch für ihn liegt das Ziel noch in 'unendlicher Ferne,' wohl im Ahnen erfassbar, aber nicht deutlich zu sehen. [. . .] Diese Tatsache ist von einschneidender Bedeutung, obwohl sie bisher—nach unserer Kenntnis der sekundären Literatur—völlig übersehen wurde." Helmut Thielicke, *Offenbarung, Vernunft und Existenz: Studien zur Religionsphilosophie Lessings*. (Gütersloh: Carl Bertelsmann, 1957) 44.

<sup>15</sup>Thielicke, *Offenbarung, Vernunft und Existenz* 44.

<sup>16</sup>"Der Sinn der Schrift, wenn sie in ihrem metaphorischen Charakter erkannt ist, wird es ja, daß 'wir' durch sie 'auf nähere und bessere Begriffe [. . .] geleitet werden können' (§ 77). Und deshalb kommen wir auch wieder über den Stand unseres eigenen Bewußtseins hinaus, wenn wir die Schrift nicht von uns, sondern uns von ihr und sie selbst von der Möglichkeit des Bedeutens ihrer Worte abhängig machen. Nur so läßt sich die Identität der Bedeutung überschreiten, die wir jeweils für den Augenblick unseres Begreifens herstellen und mit der wir [. . .] hinter der Zukunft unseres eigenen Verstehens zurückbleiben." Thomas Althaus, *Das Uneigentliche ist das Eigentliche: Metaphorische Darstellung in der Prosa bei Lessing und Lichtenberg*. (Münster: Aschenordorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1991) 174.

<sup>17</sup>Baumgarten, *Theoretische Ästhetik* 4. Schweizer's translation of the passage reads: "Die Verworrenheit ist die Mutter des Irrtums. Meine Antwort: a) Aber sie ist eine unerläßliche Voraussetzung für die Entdeckung der Wahrheit, da die Natur keinen Sprung macht aus der Dunkelheit in die Klarheit des Denkens. Aus der Nacht führt der Weg nur über die Morgenröte zum Mittag. [. . .] c) Es wird nicht das verworrene Denken empfohlen, sondern es geht darum, die Erkenntnis überhaupt zu verbessern, soweit ihr notwendigerweise ein Rest verworrenen Denkens anhaftet." Baumgarten, *Theoretische Ästhetik* 5.