



International Herder Society – Internationale Herder-Gesellschaft

Call for Papers: Herder's Rhetorics in the Context of the 18th Century

The Herder conference 2012 is dedicated to »Herder's Rhetorics in the Context of the 18th Century« and will take place in Schloss Beuggen (Rheinfelden/Germany, close to Basle) from 10 September (2pm) to 13 September 2012 (4pm) (<http://www.schloss-beuggen.de/index2.htm>).

We herewith invite scholars interested in participating at the conference to submit a one-page proposal for conference papers by 30 September 2011. The paper proposals will be examined by the incumbent board of the Herder Society (Beate Allert, Heinrich Clairmont, Johannes Schmidt, Ralf Simon). Invitations will follow based on the evaluation of proposals. The organizers will bear the costs for venue, board and lodging. However, travel expenses cannot be covered. There is a small conference fee to be paid.

Keynote lectures will be delivered by Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann (Philosophy), Philipp Stoellger (Theology), Peter L. Oesterreich (Philosophy/ Rhetoric), Dietmar Till (Rhetoric), Marion Heinz (Philosophy).

Proposals (in English or German) of no more than one page should be sent to:

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In charge of conceptualization and organization: Ralf Simon (president of the Herder Society) in accordance with the board of the Herder Society.

Herder's Rhetorics in the Context of the 18th Century

Johann Gottfried Herder's writings pursue the reorganization of the old European fields of knowledge to an emerging concept of modern cultural studies. Herder invents genres of theory or crucially develops them further: philosophy of language, philosophy of history, anthropology, ethnology, literary studies. He introduces a new concept of history, drafts complementary concepts of world literature and national literature, establishes a new concept of historiography, which he crosses with culturally critical impulses, sustains this by means of far-reaching physiological and anthropological reflections and embeds it in a philosophy of world history underpinned by natural philosophy. His main occupation is that of a theologian, and also in this field he produces a substantial and highly complex oeuvre which deserves to be considered from a genuinely transdisciplinary perspective.

The planned and herewith announced conference suggests the examination of the role and function, latency and presence of rhetoric in both Herder's and his contemporaries' works. It thus proposes to thematize an episteme, which, from the outset, is situated beyond all disciplines and yet suspected to substantially influence their common basis. The role of rhetoric during the 'Sattelzeit', the transitional period around 1800, has been doubly determined:¹ On the level of manifest text structuration its influence decreases, whereas it gains power on the generative level. It enters the deep structure, whereas in the second half of the 18th century texts frequently exhibit an explicitly anti-rhetoric disposition. In this, Herder is quite exemplary. In the *Schulreden* he explicitly takes a stand against school rhetoric, yet his concepts are characterized by rhetorical methods of organization. It is already apparent from this that the idea of rhetoric must be pushed beyond the narrower concept of school rhetoric. Open, transformed and expanded concepts of rhetoric will have to be discussed. The matrix of questions sets out accordingly:

Language

Humanism of language (Sprachhumanismus): With the concept of the humanism of language, Karl-Otto Apel reconstructed the rhetorical dimension of modern notions of language from Dante to Vico.² However, the book's chapter on Herder remains to be written. Herder indeed begins 'sprachhumanistisch', i.e. from the perspective of the humanism of language, when he deals with the questions of language improvement, foreign language learning, erudition, European education and stylistics of national languages in his early paper *Über den Fleiß in mehreren gelehrten Sprachen* (1764). The questions of the public ('aptum'), the language situation and the historicity of language situate language in the context of rhetoric as a 'tool' for humanistic intentions. It is most interesting to see that in his later works, more or less after the intermezzo of the philosophy of language, Herder returns to these initial motifs (*Humanitätsbriefe*, *Adrastea*). So far the overall situation has not been analyzed. It seems necessary to open up the debate around Herder to include other authors of the day (Lessing, Moritz et al.).

¹ Cf. John Bender and David Wellbery: *Die Entschränkung der Rhetorik*, in: *Texte und Lektüren*. Ed. by Aleida Assmann, Frankfurt a.M. 1996, pp. 79-104.

² Karl-Otto Apel: *Die Idee der Sprache in der Tradition des Humanismus von Dante bis Vico*, Bonn ³1980.

Philosophy of language: In his paper *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1772) Herder develops a very fundamental theory of linguistic metaphor. With the concept of metaphor, Herder situates the core concept of rhetoric in the center of his idea of language. As is well known, in Quintilian ‘transference’ is not only the name for the one trope (metaphor), but also for the whole elocutio. Therefore the course of the transformation of rhetoric by Herder’s philosophy of language has to be examined. Perhaps this can be developed from its repercussions. Nietzsche inserted almost word-for-word formulations by Herder – imparted to him by Gustav Gerber’s paper on Herder in *Die Sprache als Kunst* – in his variant of rhetoric in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne*. – It should be mentioned that Nietzsche’s core formulations derive from the very passages of Herder’s criticism of Kant in which Herder rhetorically undermines Kant’s philosophical concepts (cf. *Metakritik*, FHA VIII, 412).

Rhetoric of Life

In his physio-anthropological papers (esp.: *Übers Erkennen und Empfinden [in] der menschlichen Seele*, *Viertes Kritisches Wäldchen*) Herder speaks of the different senses, of their communication among and with one another, so to speak, of the transfer and mutual lending of their perceptions. Among the senses precognitive judgments take place, for instance when the sense of touch ‘informs’ the vision that the world is three-dimensional, that it has a depth and that there are massive bodies in it. It is these transferences which actually bring about the sensorium commune at all, that is the texture (Gewebe) of the soul. It seems as if Herder were using rhetorical procedures (among others: transference, shift, condensation; that is metaphor, metonymy, symbolization) in order to analyze the texture of life. The question to be dealt with thus is, whether we can speak of a ‘rhetoric of life’ in an anthro-physiological sense. Does Herder organize his anthropology quasi as text? And can this question be expanded to contemporary texts: Platner’s *Anthropologie für Ärzte und Weltweise*, Moritz’ *Erfahrungs-Seelenkunde*, Schiller’s papers in the context of his dissertation, Wezel, Krüger etc.?

Narratives of History

Herder’s development of a new concept of history has frequently been taken as a theme, perhaps too frequently on the premise of being regarded as a precursor of historicism. A detailed narratological analysis of his design of world history has still to be carried out. Which narrative models does Herder follow? What position does he take up within other narratives of history? Lessing’s *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* sketches a different narrative logic than Herder, yet a differential analysis is still to be made. The same applies to comparisons with Iselin, Schiller, Adelung, Flögel and many others. The narrative models of the Enlightenment, which were oriented towards concepts of progress, are rendered considerably more complicated by Herder. It seems as if Herder’s narrative concept had to be assembled from a plurality of different narratives, so as to combine narration and metanarration, history of progress and history of depravation, historiography and cultural criticism, open and closed models. To that effect, what does a complex narratology of history look like, and moreover:

How can a description of the rhetoric of narratives be adjusted? – Precisely this matter seems to definitely require going beyond Herder and towards his contemporaries.

Rhetoric and Theology

Homiletics can be called the rhetorical part of theology. The doctrine of preaching reflects on the adequacy of the word for the audience, and this reflection enters deeply into the stylistic gesture of theological discourse. Of greater interest, however, may be the following observation based on the *Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts*, that Herder's arguably most central theologeme of all, the hieroglyphic of creation (Schöpfungshieroglyphe), has one of its direct origins in rhetoric, i.e. in the doctrine of memory, in memoria (cf. Cicero, *Ad Herennium* and Quintilian). Next to numerous other traditions – hermetic ones, too – that Herder deals with, there is a considerable rhetorical heritage flowing right into the centre of his theology. This fact should be substantiated by positive philological evidence; moreover, it ought to be reflected on theologically: What part does rhetoric play in God's education plan? Is there a link between Herder's notion of accommodation (Akkommodation) and his theological rhetoric?

This nexus of questions may serve as a starting point for a discussion of the relation between theology and rhetoric – a discussion which should also take into account Herder's precarious position in theological debate. Herder's theology was unsuccessful in the 18th century and remained so in the historiography of protestant theology. Is this to do with rhetoric?

Rhetoric and Philology / Aesthetics

In his theoretical works on the ode, Herder subdivides his texts into invention and style (inventio, elocutio). In his early writings, he attempts to historicize the term 'taste' (Geschmack: also a rhetorical category in the 18th century). His thoughts on the necessity of a New Mythology focus on the rhetoric of poetic themes, but also on poetry's 'Sitz im Leben'. It leaps to the eye: Herder's reflections on literature and philology largely follow the guidelines of rhetoric. At the same time, his vitalistic stilistics precludes any rigid rhetorical approach. All the more reason for us to emphasize, precisely in this context, the complex rhythm of rhetoric's presence and latency in Herder's writings, of both its repudiation and structural importance.

Without doubt the question of rhetoric is also relevant in connection with the founding text of philosophical aesthetics, Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*. Scholars have already established the presence of the entire rhetorical nomenclature in this text. To what extent does Baumgarten's rhetoric enter not only into the gnoseologia inferior (see above: Rhetoric of Life), but also into the theory of the 'Kunstschöne', of the ideal work of art?

With these works Herder is one of the key authors for the development of disciplinary literature studies out of their relation to the 'fine arts'. The question of rhetoric ties in with the distinction between a traditional understanding of philology and a new concept of 'literature studies' as cultural studies. This is a field which can only be considered adequately if we examine the case of Herder in contradistinction to other authors of his time.

The doctrine of emotions (*Affektenlehre*) plays a decisive role in this field of transformation where the old concept of the 'fine arts' is transformed into a new philosophical aesthetics on the one hand and into various new aesthetics related to particular art forms on the other. Herder's poetics transforms emotions (*Affekte*) into tonalities and moods. Moreover, there can be found first endeavors at a theory of music, based on emotions and their transformation. – This aspect, too, needs to be considered in the wider context of the 18th century as a whole.

Rhetoric of Writing

Herder is a great polemicist. At times, his texts are so extensively governed by a masked discourse of attack and defense that his own position can hardly be determined. Speaking in masks; strategically assuming a position in order to criticize another; the experience that before long, this position in its turn can change strategically: This particular style has been emphasized by Herder scholars on various occasions. And yet it still requires detailed and fundamental analysis, which undoubtedly will again lead back to the question of rhetoric. In this context, we should like to discuss key words such as conjectural thought, thinking in masks, textual poetics as performative textual argument, or the marking of the historicity of language.

In this context, there is a thought which could be termed the rhetorization of the Enlightenment and of the concept of Enlightenment. In the midst of the Enlightenment age, Herder (and with him: Hamann, Lessing, Moritz et al.) develops the concept of a critique of Enlightenment, possibly already anticipating the notion of a 'Dialectic of Enlightenment'. With his lists and concepts of future sciences, Herder goes far beyond the Enlightenment canon. To put it rhetorically: The art of invention (*inventio*) transcends the initial Enlightenment impulse by enforcing its rhetorization. – In this sense, Herder's position within and toward the Enlightenment ought to be fundamentally redetermined by way of a hitherto neglected approach, that of rhetoric.

Viewing these potential epistemic fields it becomes clear that we have to work with an open ensemble of rhetorical concepts. Of course the traditions of classical rhetoric (Aristotle, Cicero, *Ad Herennium*, Quintilian) are subject of debate, but so are modern notions of rhetoric (from Erasmus to *topica universalis*). The more recent scholarship of rhetoric has conceptually widened the concept of rhetoric in various ways.

Hans Blumenberg's anthropological concept of rhetoric will certainly be of high importance for our discussion of Herder. But we should also take into account the astonishing renaissance of rhetoric in deconstructive thought. What is the relation of Herder's texts to deconstruction? Derrida developed his grammatology during his discussion of Rousseau. Is not Herder the German parallel to this argumentative nexus? What kind of relations to the 18th century and beyond can we establish by thinking Herder in terms of recent rhetorical concepts?

The conference attempts to combine various questions and problems. We should like to approach Herder from a wider context: the context of the 18th century, the context of the history of rhetoric, the context of current research in rhetoric, and the context of Herder's characteristic interdisciplinarity.

The conference addresses renowned Herder scholars, renowned scholars of rhetoric as well as 18th-century experts. This broadly based call for papers also wants to reach a considerable number of younger academics and PhD researchers. The internationally oriented Herder-Society aims to ensure a high degree of internationality.



Freiwillige Akademische Gesellschaft, Basel



Deutsches Seminar der Universität Basel