

CHAPTER ONE

THE ENLIGHTENMENT, THE *AUFKLÄRUNG* AND THEIR OPPONENTS

Before dealing with the role of the Rosicrucian revival in the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, it is necessary to appreciate the problems involved in defining these terms. First, what was the Enlightenment? Historians differ in their approaches to this question, and the Enlightenment itself was a protean phenomenon, which varied from country to country and underwent changes as it progressed. Furthermore, much depends on whether one chooses to view the Enlightenment as a school of thought, a social movement or merely a certain style and way of life. Too rigid and exact a definition would be inappropriate and unhelpful, since human beings frequently rally to a banner (or against it) without having a precise notion of what the banner represents. It is possible, however, by distilling what has been written and said about the Enlightenment by some of its leading proponents and by modern scholars, to arrive at a broadly-agreed consensus as to what the Enlightenment banner stood for in a general sense.¹ I shall deal first with the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment in general and then with their particular German versions. In dealing with the general picture I shall confine myself largely to the intellectual aspects of the movement, considering certain broadly-agreed attributes and bearing in mind that it is always possible to point to individual thinkers who do not fit the picture. It is necessary for me to begin by looking beyond the German context to this wider view of the Enlightenment, since the reception of the Enlightenment in Germany as well as the reaction against it can only be understood if one has some knowledge of certain basic philosophical issues, their provenance and implications. In the German context I shall consider how the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment interacted with social and political factors and national traditions.

Arguably the most fundamental of the broadly-agreed attributes of the Enlightenment was the elevation of the faculty of reason to a new position of eminence. As the French *Encyclopédie* puts it:

¹ My approach is based on conversations with Sir Isaiah Berlin (29 May 1988) and Dr. Lawrence Brockliss (18 March, 1968) as well as Dr. Brockliss's series of lectures at Oxford on the French Enlightenment (Hilary Term, 1988), supplemented by the sources I have quoted.

“Reason is to the philosopher what grace is to the Christian”.

Grace causes the Christian to act, reason the philosopher.

Other men are carried away by their passions, their actions not being preceded by reflection: these are the men who walk in darkness. On the other hand, the philosopher, even in his passions, acts only after reflection; he walks in the dark, but with a torch.²

This was, of course, not the first time that reason had been invoked in human history, but it now had a new importance. Franklin Le Van Baumer, in his *Main Currents of Western Thought*, writes:

Reason, particularly among the French, was partly Cartesian and partly Lockean and Newtonian. Voltaire both praised and blamed Descartes. He blamed him for his *esprit de système* and his metaphysical errors. Nevertheless, “he taught the men of his time how to reason.” Voltaire was thinking of Descartes’ methodical doubt, which he hoped might be extended now beyond metaphysical ideas to social mores and institutions. Thus reason meant, primarily, the critical reason that takes nothing on trust, is suspicious of authority, tradition and revelation . . . It was also Lockean in its distrust of all intellectual “systems,” including those erected by the Cartesians.³

Later, from about the middle of the century there came a tendency to emphasize the importance of the heart and feelings as well as the head, giving rise to a cult of “sensibility”. It was not, however, the case that feeling usurped the place of reason, except perhaps in the case of the German *Sturm und Drang* movement where the cult of sensibility took an unusually extreme form. For the most part, as Norman Hampson puts it, “if feeling became pilot, reason remained in command”.⁴

Along with the elevation of reason went a new faith in science. Here the work of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was seminal. By his emphasis on the observation of nature, Newton played a central role in promoting the view that the truth was to be found in God’s work and that one need not look for it in his word.⁵ Although Newton, and the typical thinker of the Enlightenment, believed that the two were perfectly compatible, Newton’s laws, such as his law of gravity, appeared to explain away much that had previously been explained in terms of divine action. They also undermined the old cosmology, for by

² Excerpted in Franklin Le Van Baumer, *Main Currents of Western Thought* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978), p. 380.

³ Baumer, p. 366.

⁴ Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (London, Penguin, 1968; latest reprint, 1987), p. 186.

⁵ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (first published as *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, 1932; English version, Princeton University Press, 1951), pp. 41-3.

extending the law of gravity to the whole cosmos, Newton destroyed the classical division between the celestial and sublunary realms.

Thanks to the work of Newton and other scientists of his age, it appeared that the whole plan of the universe lay waiting in nature for science to reveal. Hence what Ernst Cassirer describes as “the almost unlimited power which scientific knowledge gains over all the thought of the Enlightenment”.⁶ The scientific spirit was extended to society, law, politics, even poetry.

Related to this new faith in reason and science is what Karl Popper calls “optimistic epistemology,”⁷ that is the notion that, while truth may be hidden, it is discoverable, and once it has been discovered it is unmistakable to those who use their understanding correctly. It follows from this that there is only one truth and one reality. The universe ultimately contains no contradictions, no mysteries and no miracles. Edward Gibbon, for example, rejected miracles when he wrote in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: “Accustomed long since to observe and to respect the invariable order of nature, our reason, or at least our imagination, is not sufficiently prepared to sustain the visible action of the Deity.”⁸ The search for truth is to be carried on by rational thought and by scientific observation of nature.

Along with this optimistic epistemology went an optimistic view of human nature and of the possibilities for humankind. “Man is not born evil;” declared Voltaire “he becomes evil, as he becomes sick.”⁹ Thus proponents of the Enlightenment tended to deny or play down the notion of original sin. It is true that Cassirer may be exaggerating when he writes that: “The concept of original sin is the common opponent against which all the trends of the philosophy of the Enlightenment join forces”¹⁰ for the clergymen who belonged to what David Sorkin has called the “religious Enlightenment” were inclined to retain the concept of original sin.¹¹ Nevertheless, the main tendency of the Enlightenment was to oppose the doctrine or to draw its teeth. The Catholic Alexander Pope, in his *Essay on Man*, as Hampson points out, reduces the Fall to a point in pre-history marking the end of a Golden Age in which humanity had lived in harmony with nature.¹² No blame is attached by Pope to this event, and there is no notion of damnation for those who fail to remove the taint of original sin through divine grace. Indeed reason has, to a large extent, taken the

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁷ Karl R. Popper, “On the Sources of Knowledge and Ignorance” in *Conjectures and Refutations* (London and Henley, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 4th edition 1972), pp. 3-30.

⁸ Baumer, p. 368.

⁹ Voltaire, *On Evil and Free Will*, excerpted by Baumer, p. 413.

¹⁰ Cassirer, p. 141.

¹¹ David Sorkin, “Remapping the Enlightenment”, seminar at St. John’s College, Oxford, 20th February, 1989.

¹² Hampson, p. 102.

place of grace as the means for attaining happiness. Pope is typical of a widely-held Enlightenment view that happiness is attainable in this world. It was held that by education and by a just system of law and government, humankind would become “healthy, wealthy and wise”, to use the words written by Condorcet in 1794.¹³ Progress was therefore a key word in the vocabulary of the Enlightenment.

This vision of humankind’s happy future was a universal vision, based on the belief that all human beings share the same essential nature and the same fundamental rights. In some respects the Enlightenment was, as Baumer points out, a great leveller. “Assuming the sameness of human nature everywhere, it equalized all men, ironing out national and cultural differences, destroying special privilege and social status.”¹⁴ This, however, was more a feature of the later Enlightenment than of its earlier phase. Pope, for example, believed that human beings naturally form a hierarchy, and in this he was not alone. Most men of letters of the period drew a sharp distinction between their own educated milieu and the illiterate mob; and *noblesse*, even among the educated, continued to be a barrier to social integration, especially in Germany.¹⁵ It would therefore be a mistake to equate Enlightenment thought with egalitarianism.

The obstacles that the Enlightenment wished to clear out of its path were ignorance, oppression, superstition, prejudice and blind faith in authority and tradition. This frequently brought Enlightenment thinkers into conflict with orthodox Christianity, especially in the form of the Catholic Church. In their attitudes to religion, the adherents of the Enlightenment varied. As Baumer writes: “Not many of them, however, became atheists. For revealed religion they substituted their own brand of natural religion, called ‘deism.’ Deism was a watered down theism, and it represented an attempt to construct a religion in keeping with modern science.”¹⁶ Thus, while they were not necessarily hostile to religion as such, they were apt to reject or play down any form of revelation, scriptural or otherwise, that they saw as conflicting with reason or observation. Sacred texts, religious traditions and the insights of mystics held *per se* no authority for them. Consequently they had a tendency to drift towards natural religion, and their world-view was essentially humanity-oriented rather than god-oriented. In Pope’s famous dictum “the proper study of mankind is Man”.¹⁷ Along with these tendencies went a tendency towards inter-faith toleration. Since natural religion was universal, all religions were seen as at-

¹³ Baumer, p. 368.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

¹⁵ Hampson, pp. 110 and 154.

¹⁶ Baumer, p. 369.

¹⁷ Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, Book IV (1733), l.3.

tempts to express the same basic truths and ethical values. This point of view was expressed by Lessing in *Nathan der Weise* and by Christian Wolff when he praised Confucius and the morals of the Chinese—and paid for his toleration by being expelled from his chair at the University of Halle.¹⁸

Another aspect of the Enlightenment that is worth mentioning here is its view of history. Proponents of the Enlightenment saw themselves, in a highly conscious way, as continuing a long-standing struggle against the enemies of freedom. To quote Peter Gay:

As the Enlightenment saw it, the world was, and always had been divided between ascetic, superstitious enemies of the flesh, and men who affirmed life, the body, knowledge, and generosity; between mythmakers and realists, priests and philosophers. Heinrich Heine, wayward son of the Enlightenment, would later call these parties, most suggestively, Hebrews and Hellenes.¹⁹

According to Gay, the Enlightenment view of history was correspondingly dualistic, with the past divided into four main epochs. First came the era of the Old Testament and of the great civilizations of the Middle East: Egypt, Persia, Mesopotamia. Next came the era of ancient Greece and Rome. Third came the Christian era. And finally came modern times, the era of the Enlightenment. The first and third of these were murky ages of credulity, myth and superstition. The second and fourth were brightened by the light of reason, science and freedom.²⁰ This historical scheme will prove to be relevant when I come to examine the literature of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.

When it came to social and political questions the Enlightenment thinkers advocated a variety of different systems of government, from enlightened despotism to democracy. Virtually all, however, would have followed Locke in rejecting the divine right of kings and the sacrosanctity of the social hierarchy that went with it.²¹

It is also possible to speak of an Enlightenment style of writing: a preference for the clear, unambiguous message, however wittily and elegantly expressed, and a distrust of the poetic, the metaphorical, the symbolic, the moody—anything that smacked of mystery and irrationality.

If these are some of the broadly agreed attributes of the Enlightenment, those of the Counter-Enlightenment are essentially the opposite and can be characterized as follows:

¹⁸ Hampson, p. 104.

¹⁹ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation*, Vol. I *The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York, Knopf, 1966), p. 33.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Baumer, p. 371.

Pride of place is given not to reason but to faith and tradition. Typical of this point of view is the German anti-*Aufklärung* philosopher, Johann Georg Hamann (1730-88). In Hamann's view, as summarized by Isaiah Berlin, "everything rests on faith; faith is as basic an organ of acquaintance with reality as the senses. To read the Bible is to hear the voice of God, who speaks in a language which he has given man the grace to understand."²² By the same token, men like Hamann were deeply suspicious of rational science.

To the optimistic epistemology of the Enlightenment, the Counter-Enlightenment opposed a pessimistic epistemology. As Karl Popper writes:

The contrast between epistemological pessimism and optimism may be said to be fundamentally the same as that between epistemological traditionalism and rationalism. (I am using the latter term in its wider sense in which it is opposed to irrationalism, and in which it covers not only Cartesian intellectualism but empiricism also.) For we can interpret traditionalism as the belief that, in the absence of an objective and discernible truth, we are faced with the choice between accepting the authority of tradition, and chaos.²³

Just as we cannot trust our rational faculties as a means of arriving at truth, according to the Counter-Enlightenment view, so there is also no single, universal truth outside the Christian revelation. Hamann, for example, believed firmly that all truth is particular.²⁴ By the same token, there are no universal solutions to human problems since human nature is not the same all over the world. It was the realization of this view which led the Viennese writer Leopold Alois Hoffmann to turn away from the *Aufklärung* and become one of its most vociferous enemies. As Hoffmann himself wrote: "It became particularly apparent to me that it was not possible for an equal measure of Enlightenment to exist everywhere, in every country and locality...."²⁵

The Counter-Enlightenment was deeply pessimistic about humankind, emphasizing the traditional Christian view of original sin and the impossibility of human beings improving themselves without divine aid, the support of tradition and the fear of authority. Instead of having a progressive view of human society, the thinkers of the Counter-Enlightenment often saw their own age as representing a decline. An example of this is found in Giambattista Vico with his cyclical theory of human history in which an "age of gods" is followed by an "age of heroes" which in turn is followed by an "age of men". The age of

²² Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (London, 1979; paperback, Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 7.

²³ Popper, p. 6.

²⁴ Berlin, p. 7.

²⁵ Leopold Alois Hoffmann, *Geschichte der Päpste*, Vol. II, Vorrede, quoted by Fritz Valjavec in *Die Entstehung der politischen Strömungen in Deutschland 1770-1815* (Munich, Oldenbourg, 1951), p. 28.

men invariably sinks into barbarism and destroys itself, whereupon the survivors turn back to divine guidance, and the cycle begins again.²⁶

Whereas the Enlightenment glorified the classical age and its own era, the Counter-Enlightenment tended to glorify the Old Testament era and the Middle Ages. We shall find specific examples of this in due course.

Politically, the Counter-Enlightenment position is not easy to characterize, but it tended to reflect the particularist view that has been mentioned. Nationality was favoured over cosmopolitanism, local laws and customs were preferred to general notions of rights and justice. Also, along with the pessimistic view of humankind went a distrust of reform, a respect for tradition and a deference towards authority, even when it was given to cruelties and abuses. Belief in the divine right of kings is a recurring theme that will be encountered among Counter-Enlightenment thinkers.

In their writings, the men of the Counter-Enlightenment often opposed the clarity of the Enlightenment writers with a deliberate opacity. Again, Hamann is an example.

These, I would argue, are the main features of the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment world views, stated in their most general form. These will be useful as rough criteria when examining the philosophical and ideological stance of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz. It is important, however, to appreciate that these two sets of tenets are divided by no hard and fast boundary, and it is not always easy to say of a particular figure that he or she belongs to one viewpoint of the other. Vico is a good example of a person who is seen by some historians (e.g. Norman Hampson) as an Enlightenment writer, and by others (e.g. Isaiah Berlin) as a Counter-Enlightenment one. Another case in point is Isaac Newton, who, as we have seen, is regarded as a key figure of the early Enlightenment because of the rational scientific methods that he promoted. Yet it has now become clear, from the work of leading Newton scholars, that Newton's whole scientific enterprise was part and parcel of a search for a *prisca sapientia* in which biblical studies and alchemy occupied more of his attention than astronomy and optics.²⁷ Therefore, unless we are prepared to disqualify Newton as an proto-Enlightenment figure, we must either redefine the term "rational science" or acknowledge that it meant something different to Newton from what it means to the scientist of today. This must be borne in mind when we come to examine the alchemical activities of the Gold- und Rosenkreuz.

²⁶ See Vico's *The New Science*, excerpted by Baumer, pp. 448-450.

²⁷ See Frank Manuel, *A Portrait of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1968), and Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, *The Foundations of Newton's Alchemy* (Cambridge University Press, 1975).

It must also be understood that the term "Counter-Enlightenment" implies not just an anti-Enlightenment position but rather an active counter-offensive against the Enlightenment. As Epstein points out in *The Genesis of German Conservatism*, the traditionalist point of view in Germany had been largely un-selfconscious and un-articulated until it was forced on to the alert by the growth of the progressive forces. Only from about 1770, according to Epstein, did it emerge as an articulate movement in Germany.²⁸ Whether we adopt Berlin's wider view of the Counter-Enlightenment as going back to Vico, or whether we take Epstein's narrower view, it must surely be the case that to merit being called a Counter-Enlightenment type, a person must be either a traditionalist whose traditionalism has acquired a new urgency in the face of what he sees as the Enlightenment threat, or someone who is converted, as Hamann was, to the traditionalist point of view and becomes an ardent defender of his new cause.

A further difficulty in characterizing the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment is that they took markedly different forms in different countries, and it would be useful at this point to outline the particular features of the German Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, to which I shall usually refer as the *Aufklärung* and anti-*Aufklärung*.

First it would be helpful to say something about the word *Aufklärung* itself. The use of the word to mean what historians now mean by the Enlightenment was a narrow application of a term that had much wider connotations and continued to be used in its broader sense alongside the more specialized meaning, which it did not acquire until the last third of the 18th century. Furthermore it was often appropriated and used in a positive way by the enemies of secularity, rationalism and the other features associated with the Enlightenment. It is used by these elements up to as late as the second half of the 19th century.²⁹ Thus we shall often find the "anti-*Aufklärer*" presenting themselves as upholders of the "true *Aufklärung*". According to Brunner, Conze and Koselleck in their *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*:

The term *Aufklärung*, by the definition that prevails today, signifies the European movement of thought, beginning in the second half of the 17th century and culminating in the 18th, which, through a ... process of secularization, ushered in the modern era and led to a "de-mystification of the world" [*Entzauberung der Welt*] (Max Weber). The aim of this "de-mystification" is in principle the emancipation of human beings from the world of historical tradition, that is to say their liberation from all authorities, teachings, systems, allegiances, institutions and conven-

²⁸ Klaus Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 23.

²⁹ *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, edited by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck, 4 vols. (Stuttgart, Ernst Klett/J.G. Cotta, 1972-82), Vol. I, pp. 243-4.

tions which cannot withstand critical examination by the autonomous human faculty of reason.³⁰

Here the term is used in a European context, but where it is used to refer to the German Enlightenment it must be qualified in a number of ways. To a certain extent the ideas and modes of the German *Aufklärung* were taken from abroad. English writers such as Locke and Shaftesbury, and French ones such as Descartes and Voltaire, were widely read by the *Aufklärer*. Furthermore the style of the *Aufklärung* was deeply imbued with French influences, and the French language was widely admired as a medium for refined discourse. Frederick the Great, for example, who was well read in the literature of the French Enlightenment, wrote in French and preferred to speak it rather than German. In certain important respects, however, the German *Aufklärung* differed from the French or English versions of the Enlightenment. Although the basic Enlightenment philosophy, which I have attempted to outline, remains a useful point of reference in the German context, it must be appreciated that when this philosophy fell on German soil it often took root in strange and contradictory ways. To understand this it is necessary to look at social, political and religious factors.

Germany in the 18th century was a collection of nearly 2,000 sovereign entities,³¹ including large states, free cities, bishoprics and dukedoms, all owing a loose allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor, usually in the person of a Habsburg monarch. German society was thus highly decentralized, and there was no single focal point, like London or Paris, to act as a vortex of intellectual and cultural life. Consequently there was a corresponding heterogeneity in the *Aufklärung*, with local interests and influences playing a greater role than in the English or French Enlightenment.

Each one of the political entities in Germany had an administrative bureaucracy which, in the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War, had greatly increased in size and power. The old entrepreneurial class had been greatly weakened by the war. By contrast, the princes had extended their role in the economy. For example, the mining industry, formerly largely private, was now almost exclusively run by the states. Hence the number of people directly dependent on the rulers for their livelihood was large. In Weimar and Munich they constituted more than one third of the population.³²

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 245.

³¹Friedrich Hertz, *The Development of the German Public Mind*, 2 vols. (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1957, 1962), Vol. I, p. 35.

³²T.C.W. Blanning, *Reform and Revolution in Mainz 1743-1803* (Cambridge University Press, 1974).

Whereas in France and Britain the middle class was an important carrier of Enlightenment ideas, its German counterpart cannot be so easily characterized. In so far as it had Enlightenment leanings, the German industrial and commercial middle class tended to favour what Jonathan Knudsen calls the *ständische Aufklärung* (corporate Enlightenment), that is to say the strand of the *Aufklärung* that remained loyal to the old corporatist institutions of the individual states and localities.³³ The other strand of the *Aufklärung*, characterized by the reforming efforts of rulers, found its supporters largely in the stratum known as *die Gebildeten* (literally, “the educated ones”), who included nobles, diplomats, officers, scholars, artists and clergymen.³⁴ This class to a large extent overlapped with officialdom. Writers and thinkers, for example, instead of being members of a literary class alienated from the state as so many were in France, enjoyed positions as librarians, estate administrators, political secretaries, lawyers, tax officials and the like. This administrative class was fed by the growing number of respected universities in Germany, which had a close relationship with officialdom. Many professors moved from academe to public affairs and back again. Hence most of the German intelligentsia saw their interests as being closely bound up with the established political order within their respective states, an order which was, for the most part, aristocratically dominated. Furthermore they often regarded their rulers as champions of the people vis-à-vis the imperial authority in Vienna.

As for the rulers themselves, they were often the most energetic promoters of *Aufklärung* policies. The phenomenon of the “enlightened despot” is one of the most striking features of the German *Aufklärung*, and the outstanding example is, of course, Frederick the Great, under whose reign (1740-1786) Prussia became the nerve centre of the *Aufklärung*. Later Joseph II brought to the Habsburg lands his own brand of enlightened despotism, and other rulers, such as Karl Friedrich of Baden, carried out enlightenment policies.

In the second half of the 18th century the *Aufklärung* gained ground all over Germany. To begin with it was an alliance between the enlightened rulers, the intellectuals and a large part of the aristocracy. For the most part, these *Gebildeten* did not adopt an egalitarian view of enlightenment. They thought that the masses should be educated only to the degree that would enable them to fulfil their roles in the existing social and political structure. The same applied to other aspects of enlightened reform. Thus, as has been recognized by recent

³³ Jonathan B. Knudsen, *Justus Möser and the German Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

³⁴ Joachim Whaley, “The Protestant Enlightenment in Germany”, in *The Enlightenment in a National Context*, edited by Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 110.

historians of the period, the *Aufklärung* to a large extent tended to reinforce rather than break down the old hierarchical framework. As Joachim Whaley points out: "An inherently conservative nobility in Germany could be enlightened since the 'true enlightenment' posed no threat to its position."³⁵ This is a highly significant point since it means that one cannot, in the German context, assume that conservative aristocratic interests per se coincided with a Counter-Enlightenment position.

Another point that must be emphasized is the diversity of views as to what the concept of *Aufklärung* meant. An intense public debate on this subject was touched off by the famous prize essay question which members of the Prussian Academy were set by Frederick the Great in 1780: *Est-il utile au peuple d'être trompé, soit qu'on l'induisse dans de nouvelles erreurs, ou qu'on l'entretienne dans celles ou il est?* (Is it beneficial to the people that they should be deceived, either by being led into new misconceptions or by being kept under existing ones?) Out of the 33 competitors whose entries were accepted, 13 answered in the affirmative and 20 in the negative.³⁶ Over the course of the next decade many people expressed their views in print on this issue and on the wider question of what *Aufklärung* was. Philosophically the participants divided broadly into, on the one hand, those who saw enlightenment as the discovery and dissemination of knowledge, and, on the other, those who saw it as essentially the development of the power of reasoning.³⁷ There was also a divergence of opinion as to the social implications of enlightenment. In 1784 two prominent figures addressed the question of what enlightenment meant: Moses Mendelssohn in an article in the *Berlinische Monatschrift*, and Immanuel Kant in his famous essay *Zur Beantwortung der Frage: was ist Aufklärung?* Mendelssohn's view of *Aufklärung* was essentially as a social and educational process, and he recognized the possible conflict between the imperatives of objective truth and the needs of society. Kant, on the other hand, defined *Aufklärung* as "the escape of Man from his self-incurred tutelage". For Kant enlightenment was an individual process and involved moral and intellectual but not necessarily political liberation.³⁸

A striking feature of the debate was the number of Protestant clergymen who took part. Some, like Johann Melchior Goeze of Hamburg, opposed the ideas of the *Aufklärung* as undermining the foundations of religious and civil life. Most, however, defended the *Aufklärung*, and their pronouncements emphasized that the function of religion was primarily to help humanity and so-

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³⁶ Werner Schneiders, *Die Wahre Aufklärung* (Freiburg/Munich, Karl Alber, 1974), p. 28.

³⁷ Whaley, p. 108.

³⁸ Schneiders, pp. 43-62.

ciety rather than serve God.³⁹ These pronouncements also reveal the optimism and progressive view of history that is characteristic of the Enlightenment outlook as a whole. In 1783, for example, Georg Joachim Zollikofer, a well-known Reformed preacher in Leipzig published a sermon entitled *Der Werth der grössern Aufklärung der Menschen*, in which he stated: "At the present time there reigns, by and large, less ignorance, less superstition and blind belief than in the time of our fathers."⁴⁰ There was thus a close link between the Protestant churches and the *Aufklärung*, and few *Aufklärer* rejected religion as such. Indeed Christoph Friedrich Nicolai was not expressing an unusual view when he saw his own age as the fulfillment of the Lutheran Reformation.⁴¹ *Aufklärung*, therefore, was widely seen not just as a spreading of knowledge but as a positive moral force.

The religious dimension is of particular importance to any understanding of the *Aufklärung*. In order to understand this it is necessary to appreciate the profound way in which Germany was affected by the aftermath of the Reformation and the wars of religion. The principle of *cuius regio eius religio* continued to apply after the Peace of Westphalia (1648), and religious refugees from one state to another were found well into the 18th century. Germans of a liberal disposition were acutely aware of the misery caused by sectarian hostility. Thus their liberalism was, in Henri Brunschvig's words "not primarily an attack on social privilege, as in France, nor an appeal to the proponents of economic reform, as in England, but a demand for religious peace."⁴²

The *Aufklärung* began in the Protestant north and spread south. For example, the educational innovations, pioneered in the north were widely adopted in the southern Catholic countries. Although the Catholic territories were generally more resistant to the *Aufklärung* than the Protestant ones, and although the Jesuit order vigorously opposed it, many Catholics, including a significant number of clergy, supported it.⁴³ Joseph II, despite his anti-clerical measures and his independent stance from the Pope, remained a Catholic throughout his life.

A phenomenon that is of particular significance in the religious life of Germany was the emergence of Pietism. This was a movement for the regeneration of Protestantism, which placed emphasis on inward experience, virtuous

³⁹ Whaley, p. 113.

⁴⁰ Schneiders, p. 32.

⁴¹ Whaley, p. 111.

⁴² Henri Brunschvig, *Enlightenment and Romanticism in Eighteenth-Century Prussia* (first published, Paris, 1947; English translation by Frank Jellineck, University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 9.

⁴³ T.C.W. Blanning, "The Enlightenment in Catholic Germany", in *The Enlightenment in a National Context* (see note 31), pp. 118-26.

living, good works and the feeling and emotional side of religion, as against the ossified dogmatism that had come to dominate German Protestantism. It had a strong mystical component, and it strove to narrow the gulf between the clergy and the laity. For the most part, however, the Pietists attempted to work within the Lutheran Church and later the Reformed Church. Although it has earlier roots, the movement can be said to have begun in 1675 with the publication of Philip Jakob Spener's *Pia Desideria*. By 1700 there were about 32 German cities in which the Pietists had attained a position of great influence.⁴⁴ Halle, under the leadership of Spener's follower August Hermann Francke, became the great centre of the movement in its early stages. The movement had counterparts in other countries, such as Jansenism and Quietism in France and Methodism and Quakerism in England. The relationship of Pietism to the *Aufklärung* is a complex one, and there was a good deal of interaction between the two. In its egalitarianism, its social concerns and its dislike of coercive religion, it had much in common with the *Aufklärung*. On the other hand, it was Pietist influence that brought about the expulsion of the great *Aufklärung* figure, Christian Wolff, from the University of Halle in 1723. Furthermore, many leading anti-*Aufklärung* figures, such as J.G. Hamann, were either Pietists or strongly imbued with Pietist influence, while many pro-*Aufklärung* figures, such as C.F. Nicolai, had been given a Pietist upbringing but had violently revolted against it. Pietism can be seen as part of a strong mystical stream in German life and thought which, as Brunschvig writes, "under various names and either through organized sects such as Pietism or through isolated individuals such as Böhme and Franz von Baader, relieves souls oppressed by the tutelage of reason".⁴⁵

From this account of the complexities of the *Aufklärung*, it will be apparent that there is no simple scale for measuring degrees of enlightenment in the German context. It must also be borne in mind that the *Aufklärung* changed over time. Initially, as has been said, it was an alliance between *Gebildeten* and enlightened rulers and aristocrats. This began to break down, however, as enlightened absolutism found itself under attack from two opposite sides. On the one hand the enlightened rulers came in for increasing criticism from the radical *Aufklärer* who had been supporters of enlightened despotism but were becoming impatient for more far-reaching legal and constitutional reform than the rulers were able or willing to deliver.⁴⁶ This faction grew more vociferous from the 1770s, and was greatly inspired by the American Revolution of 1776.

⁴⁴ Koppel S. Pinson, *Pietism as a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism* (New York, Octagon Books, 1968), p. 17.

⁴⁵ Brunschvig, p. 22.

⁴⁶ Richard van Dülmen, *Der Geheimbund der Illuminaten* (Stuttgart, Frommann-Holzboog, 1975; 2nd edition, 1977), pp. 17-18.

Its voice was heard, for example, in the large number of radical journals that appeared in those years. It found its ultimate expression in the order of the Illuminati, which flourished from the late 1770s until about 1787.

From the opposite direction the enlightened rulers were opposed by an anti-*Aufklärung* current which began to be evident from about the middle of the century. This faction was opposed to the undermining of religious and traditional values and to the importation of radical and subversive ideas from abroad, especially from France. Its supporters were a motley group, drawn from all classes and religious denominations and from all parts of Germany, though they were particularly strong in certain areas. A coterie of them existed in Mainz from 1774. Here a conservative religious journal was published by the ex-Jesuit Hermann Goldhagen. Many other ex-Jesuits were involved in the anti-*Aufklärung* movement. A group of them at Augsburg, for example, issued a stream of publications that found sympathetic readers in the north as well as the south. Another group of ex-Jesuits worked from Lucerne in Switzerland for the same cause, keeping in close touch with their Augsburg brethren and extending their influence to south Germany and Austria. The Tirol, with its strong Baroque tradition, was an important centre of opposition to Josephinism. Apart from these Jesuit groups, there were many other centres of opposition to the *Aufklärung*, such as the circle of religiously minded people in Münster surrounding Freiherr von Fürstenberg and Princess Adelheid Amalie von Gallitzin. Hamann and Hoffmann have already been mentioned as leading individuals of the anti-*Aufklärung*. Another was Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801), Swiss pastor of mystical inclinations and author of a famous work on physiognomy. He enjoyed an enormous circle of followers and friends throughout Germany, Protestant and Catholic alike.⁴⁷

Both of these factions struggled for influence at the courts of Germany during the years leading up to the French Revolution. At first the conservative faction did not measure up in strength to its rival, but with the growing demands of the radical faction, and after the Illuminati affair and especially after the French Revolution, the rulers came increasingly to fall back on conservative positions and to make common cause with the anti-*Aufklärung* faction which, by the late 1780s, was a considerable force in Germany.

So far we have conceived of the *Aufklärung* and Counter-*Aufklärung* as two broad movements or currents. In fact, however, this dualism is misleading. Heinrich Schneider, in his *Quest for Mysteries*, divides the religious life of 18th-century Germany into four separate groups: (1) the Catholic and Prot-

⁴⁷Fritz Valjavec, *Die Entstehung der politischen Strömungen in Deutschland 1770-1815* (Munich, Oldenbourg, 1951), pp. 258-65.

estant churches; (2) Pietism and related or parallel religious movements; (3) pantheistic and mystical tendencies; (4) the adherents of a religion of Enlightenment.⁴⁸ While basically accepting this analysis, I would see groups 2 and 3 as variations of the same phenomenon. Thus, I would argue, it is possible to discern three basic currents or groups of currents operating at the religious-intellectual-philosophical level in Germany: (1) the established churches; (2) Enlightenment tendencies; (3) the complex of theosophical, mystical, hermetic and Pietistic tendencies of which Rosicrucianism was part. As we shall observe, the third tendency was often as much in conflict with the first as with the second, but was also capable of allying itself with either. Without wishing to present this three-fold view in too hard-and-fast a manner, I believe that the notion of a "third current" can help us in perceiving how the Rosicrucian revival fitted into the religious, intellectual and cultural history of Germany. Both the *Aufklärung* and the "third current" sought to satisfy a desire for an expansion of human possibilities that could not be satisfied within the confines of traditional, mainstream religion. At the same time the "third current" also implied a spiritual thirst that could not be quenched by rationality. The figure of Faust, seeking in the realm of magic what he could not find in science or religion, is the classic personification of this predicament. His real-life counterparts, as we shall find, often steered an uncertain course, sometimes joining one current, sometimes another.

Having outlined the basic philosophical issues behind the Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, and having given a picture of the many interacting ideas, interests and movements that constitute the German *Aufklärung* and anti-*Aufklärung*, we may now proceed to examine the Rosicrucian revival and to see how it fits into this complex picture.

⁴⁸ Heinrich Schneider, *Quest for Mysteries: The Masonic Background for Literature in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1947), p. 25.