

HUMANITÄT VERSUS NATIONALISM AS THE MORAL FOUNDATION OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE: JEGÓR VON SIVERS' HERDERIAN COSMOPOLITANISM*

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No single author is more important for the development of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe than Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803).¹ Yet Herder's own relationship to nationalism continues to be debated.² This is partly owed to the ambivalence of the notion “nationalism” itself. There is no doubt Herder is a “nationalist”, if by this term we refer to someone who defends national diversity as valuable and cherishes and cultivates one's own language and national customs. Yet, it is more common in the anglophone world to use the term “nationalist” for someone who supports one's nation's aggressive foreign policies. In this case, Herder is rather an opponent of nationalism. There is also a third widely used notion of nationalism, known also as the “principle of nationality” according to which “the

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¹ See Peter Drews, *Herder und die Slaven: Materialien zur Wirkungsgeschichte bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (München: Sagner, 1990); *Johann Gottfried Herder: zur Herder-Rezeption in Ost- und Südosteuropa*, ed. by Gerhard Ziegengeist (Berlin-Ost: Akademie-Verlag, 1978); Holm Sundhaussen, *Der Einfluß der Herderschen Ideen auf die Nationsbildung bei den Völkern der Habsburger Monarchie* (München: Oldenburg, 1973); Konrad Bittner, “Herders ‘Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit’ und ihre Auswirkung bei den slavischen Hauptstämmen”, *Germanoslavica*, 2 (1932/33), 453–480; Konrad Bittner, *Herders Geschichtsphilosophie und die Slawen* (Reichenberg: Gebrüder Stiepel, 1929).

² For the latest views on the subject, cf. Dominic Eggel, Andre Liebich, and Deborah Mancini-Griffoli, “Was Herder a nationalist?” *The Review of Politics*, 69 (2007), 48–78, and Alan Patten, “The most natural state: Herder and nationalism”, in *History of Political Thought*, 31(2010), 658–689. See also Eva Piirimäe, “Sociability, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism in Herder's early philosophy of history”, *Sociability, Patriotism, and Cosmopolitanism in Enlightenment Political Thought*, ed. by Alexander Schmidt and Eva Piirimäe, *Special issue of History of European Ideas* (forthcoming).

political unit and the national unit should be congruent”.³ If this is the meaning of “nationalism”, determining Herder’s position on nationalism proves particularly difficult. On the one hand, Herder was a critic of the modern state, on the other hand, he also regarded states as instruments of humanity. Furthermore, in his famous *Briefe über die Beförderung der Humanität* (1793–98), Herder also put forward an account of national and cosmopolitan patriotism as the appropriate kind of moral attitude in a modern political setting. Yet what kind of political unit did he regard as the object of this patriotism? Herder’s political vision has remained debatable and his authority has been claimed both by proponents and opponents of the nation state.

In this article, I wish to highlight these ambiguities by exploring the Baltic Germans’ reception of Herder’s political philosophy. While Herder’s role for the development of Estonian and Latvian linguistic-cultural nationalism is standardly acknowledged,⁴ Herder’s significance for Baltic German identity is much more ambivalent. On the one hand, Baltic Germans have since the eighteenth century claimed him as “their own”, paying particular attention to the fact that Herder spent his formative years in Riga (1764–69), working as a teacher at the cathedral school and as an assistant preacher at the churches of the town. In the words of a prominent Baltic German phenomenologist Kurt Stavenhagen, “the Herderian in Herder emerged in Riga”.⁵ For Stavenhagen, Herder provided all nations in Central and Eastern Europe with the concept of national identity as grounded in language.⁶ On the other hand, Herder’s favorable view of various forms of medieval self-government have also been adopted for

³ See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1; cf. John Breuilly, “On the principle of nationality”, *The Cambridge history of nineteenth-century political thought*, ed. by Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys, *The Cambridge history of political thought*, 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 77–109.

⁴ The most detailed discussion of the subject is Jaan Undusk, “Hamanni ja Herderi vaim eesti kirjanduse edendajana: sünekdohhi printsiip”, *Keel ja Kirjandus*, 9, 10, 11 (1995), 577–587, 669–679, 746–756.

⁵ Kurt Stavenhagen, *Herder in Riga: Rede, gehalten zum Festaktus des Herder-Institutes am 4. September 1922* (Riga: Löffler, 1925), 4, cf. 13.

⁶ Kurt Stavenhagen, “Herders Geschichtsphilosophie und seine Geschichtsprophetie”, *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 1 (1952), 16–43 (16–17). The fact that this article is the opening article of the first number of *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* in 1952 is significant. On Herder’s role in inspiring Baltic German folkloristics, see Leonid Arbusow, “Herder und die Begründung der Volksliedforschung im deutschbaltischen Osten”, *Im Geiste Herders. Gesammelte Aufsätze zum 150. Todestage J. G. Herders*, ed. by Erich Keyser, Marburger Ostforschungen, 1 (Kitzingen: Holzner-Verlag, 1953), 129–256.

claiming his intellectual authority in support of the idea of a Baltic German *Landesstaat*.⁷ Furthermore, the concepts of *Humanität* (humanity) and cosmopolitanism (*Kosmopolitismus*, *Weltbürgersinn*) have also played a significant role in Baltic German thought, and there is a peculiar strand of cosmopolitanism that can be associated with Herder's political ideas.⁸

It is this strand of cosmopolitanism that I wish to explore in this article. I will focus on the reception of Herder in the debates of the 1860s on Baltic German political autonomy as well as the future of the Russian Empire, analyzing the political ideas of Livonian nobleman and writer Jegor Julius von Sivers (1823–79).⁹ It is a period in which there is particularly active engagement with Herder's ideas in Russia's Baltic provinces, particularly among the *Literaten* (educated burghers) of Riga. In 1864, Herder's statue was erected in Riga. In the same year, Georg Berkholz, a prominent liberal journalist and editor-in-chief of the *Baltische Monatsschrift* (from 1862–69),¹⁰ suggested that “an interesting treatise could be written on Herder's

⁷ Hans Rothfels, *Reich, Staat und Nation im deutsch-baltischen Denken. Vortrag bei der öffentlichen Sitzung der gelehrten Gesellschaft zu Königsberg am 12. Jan. 1930* (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1930), 227; cf. also Wittram's comparison of Schirren's idea of the nobility's leading role with Herder's concept of “aristodemocrat”, Reinhard Wittram, “Carl Schirrens ‘Livländische Antwort’” (1869), in *idem*, *Das Nationale als europäisches Problem. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Nationalitätsprinzips vornehmlich im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1954), 161–182 (174).

⁸ Rothfels, *Reich, Staat und Nation*, 234–237.

⁹ Sivers was born in Heimtali, Livland. He studied governmental sciences (*Kameralwissenschaften*) at the University of Tartu from 1843–46, and travelled from 1850–53 to Central America, England, Belgium, France, and Germany, beginning various literary studies already in Germany. He acquired the manor of Raudene in 1858 and administered it himself from 1863. He also worked as a supervisor of schools in the District of Valga. From 1873–74 he was assistant professor of agriculture, and from 1874 professor and dean of the agricultural faculty at the Polytechnical Institute of Riga. He published a number of important literary studies, poems, translations, and political writings and was a long-time president of the Agricultural and All-beneficial Society of Southern Livland (*Landwirtschaftliche und Gemeinnützige Sozietät von Süd-Livland*), *Deutschbaltisches Biographisches Lexikon 1710–1960*, ed. by Wilhelm Lenz (Köln, Wien: Böhlau, 1977), 735. See also Gustav Kieseritzky, *Jegor von Sivers, gest. 12 April 1879: Rede an seinem Sarge in der Aula des Polytechnikums zu Riga am 18 April 1879* (Riga, 1879) and the article on him in EEVA. Eesti vanema kirjanduse digitaalne tekstikogu, <<http://www.utlib.ee/ekollekt/eeva/index.php?lang=et&do=autor&aid=309>> (2.7.2012). Sivers also translated a number of Estonian folk songs and legends into German, and is said to have “shared the labour of his peasants till late in the evening”, Otto von Petersen, “An der Grenze der Welten. Jegor von Sivers (1823–1879), ein Streiter im Ostraum”, *Deutsche Monatshefte*, 9 (1943), 482–487 (484–485).

¹⁰ On Berkholz, see Reinhard Wittram, *Liberalismus baltischer Literaten: zur Entstehung der baltischen politischen Presse* (Riga: Löffler, 1931), 21–57. Wittram also acknowledges Herder's indirect influence (via his friend Viktor Hehn) on Berkholz, *ibid.*, 21.

relationship to modern national strivings”.¹¹ Although Berkholz acknowledged Herder’s role as the founder of the modern idea of “national spirit” (*Nationalgeist*), he reminded his readers that Herder also shared “the magnificent cosmopolitanism of all the outstanding thinkers of his century”.¹² A prominent philologist and philosopher of culture, Viktor Amadeus Hehn also published a series of articles in *Baltische Monatsschrift*, in which he drew upon a number of Herder’s insights. Berkholz accordingly celebrated his ideas as expressing “a deep commitment to cosmopolitanism and *Humanität* in the noblest sense”.¹³ Finally, in 1868 Jegór von Sivers published large excerpts from Herder’s writings on Riga, Livland, and Russia, and a number of documents relating to Herder’s stay in Riga or to his contacts with people from Livland.¹⁴ Sivers also had a more ambitious goal: in 1869, he published a pamphlet entitled *Nationalität und Humanität* in which he reflected on Herder’s “message” to his own times and political situation, now addressing specifically both the challenges of the Baltic Germans as well as those of the Russian Empire in general.¹⁵ It is this pamphlet that will stand at the center of my analysis.

The article consists of three sections. In the first, I will outline Herder’s views on Riga, Livland, and Russia in general, while also sketching the development of his ideas on patriotism, linguistic-cultural nationalism, and cosmopolitanism. Instead of applying modern categories like “nation state” to his thought, I attempt to sketch the ways in which he himself addressed the problematic nature of nationalism. In the second, I will discuss the political context of Sivers’ reception of Herder, giving an overview of the debate on Russification in Russia’s Baltic provinces. In the third, I will turn to the reception of Herder’s political philosophy by Sivers. I will argue that Sivers provided an insightful reading of Herder, as well as suggested

¹¹ Anon. [Georg Berkholz], “Livländischer Correspondenz”, *Baltische Monatsschrift* [henceforth abbr. as *BM*] 10 (1864), 265–276 (273).

¹² *Ibid.*, 273.

¹³ Quoted from Wittram, *Liberalismus baltischer Literaten*, 47. On the importance of Herder’s ideas for Viktor Hehn, see Petersen, *Herder und Hehn* (Riga: Löffler, 1931). Also the editor-in-chief of *Rigasche Zeitung*, Julius Eckardt proclaimed himself a proponent of the universal goal of *Humanität*, Wittram, *Liberalismus baltischer Literaten*, 77.

¹⁴ Jegór von Sivers, *Herder in Riga. Urkunden* (Riga, 1868). The collection also contains the speech Georg Berkholz held at the opening of the statue. For the discussions relating to the possible political repercussions of the decision to erect a statue to Herder, see the letter of Georg Berkholz to Wilhelm Petersen (14 September 1864), published in Petersen, *Herder und Hehn*, 81–84.

¹⁵ There is no commentary on Sivers’ relationship to the *Literaten* of Riga in the scholarship. A comparison of Sivers’ ideas with those of Berkholz, Eckardt, and Hehn would be a valuable subject of its own.

a specific reform program for the entire Russian Empire. The publication date of Sivers' *Nationalität und Humanität* is highly significant. In the same year (1869), the professor of geography and statistics at the University of Tartu, Carl Schirren (1826–1919), published his famous piece *Livländischer Antwort an Juri Samarin*. Sivers' *Nationalität und Humanität* was a variation on the same theme. Like Schirren, Sivers targeted what he regarded as roaring “national fanaticism” in the Russian press. Yet, while Schirren offered a particularly evocative defense of the historical rights of the Baltic *Landesstaat*, Sivers attempted to envision a new system of government both for the Baltic provinces as well as for the Russian Empire in general. Schirren's analysis gained extraordinary popularity in the Baltic provinces, providing something of a master ideology of resistance to Russian policies of cultural as well as administrative Russification. Siversian political ideas received little attention. This fact may have to do with the idealism or naiveté of his theory, but it may also point to the radicalism, or indeed boldness, of systematically adopting and publicly expressing Herderian ideas in the Baltic German context of the 1860s.

Herder's philosophy of patriotism and cosmopolitanism: an outline

In what follows, I will provide a summary of the development of Herder's views on patriotism and cosmopolitanism over his lifetime. While Herder used the term “nationalism” only once and in an ironical sense, he discussed patriotism and cosmopolitanism in a number of contexts.¹⁶ I will attempt to discuss these ideas in connection with his views on the politics of Riga, Livland, and Russia, addressing also the question of his stance on the future of multinational empires. Since it would not be possible to mention all relevant ideas or arguments, I will limit myself to bringing out the main challenges he was attempting to tackle in different periods and contexts.

Herder's most “patriotic” period was the one he spent in Riga and when still on his way to Germany, Netherlands and France in 1769.¹⁷ In his early

¹⁶ For Herder's use of the term “nationalism” as well as his discussion of the relationship of national animosity to cosmopolitanism, see my “Sociability, nationalism and cosmopolitanism”.

¹⁷ For Herder's experiences in Riga, see Rudolf Haym, *Herder nach seinem Leben und seinen Werken* (1877–1885), 1–2 vols (Berlin, 1958), I, 87–130, and Hans Graubner, “Spätaufklärer im aufgeklärten Riga: Hamann und Herder”, *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 35 (1994), 517–533. It is interesting to note that Haym's discussion of Riga is based on J. Eckardt's various writings on the history of Livland, including those written at the height of the controversy over Russification. Haym also acknowledges the information

essays, Herder understood patriotism as a moral sentiment and virtue applicable in all European “free governments”, including law-governed monarchies. He celebrated the autonomy of Riga, which he praised “as almost a Geneva under the Russian sceptre”,¹⁸ and regarded Catherine II as a benevolent monarch leaving her subjects the “modern freedom” of the security of life and ownership under the laws. For him, patriotic devotion to Riga hence coincided with devotion to the Russian empire as a whole.

At the same time, patriotism for him was not blind loyalty to the existing institutions, but rather a moral sentiment grounded in human natural sociability, and cultivated by a true, human (*menschliche*) kind of philosophy. Following the ideas of Prussian author Thomas Abbt, he saw patriotism was the only available vehicle of moral and political reform.¹⁹ Various kinds of modern developments could support patriotism, provided it was inspired in people in the right way. “Human philosophy” could reach the people through various media: from public writing to preaching in church and most importantly through education at school.²⁰

In his philosophical travel diary, *Journal meiner Reise im Jahre 1769*, Herder accordingly drafted an educational program for school children as well as a wider public²¹ to lay the ground for the political reforms.²² In devising the political reforms, one had to recognize that each individual case was different, which was why a thorough investigation of one’s specific

he received from correspondence with Eckardt, see Haym, *Herder* I, 87. Haym also extensively used both Sivers’ *Herder in Riga* and *Humanität und Nationalität*.

¹⁸ Quoted from Graubner, “Spätaufklärer”, 527.

¹⁹ For Abbt, see my “Dying for the fatherland: Thomas Abbt’s theory of aesthetic patriotism”, *History of European Ideas*, 35 (2009), 194–208 and *idem*, *Thomas Abbt (1738–1766) and the Philosophical Genesis of German Nationalism* (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2006).

²⁰ Johann Gottfried von Herder, “Do We Still Have a Fatherland?” (1765), *idem*, *Another philosophy of history and selected political writings*, ed. by Daniel Pellerin and Ioannis Evrigenis (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Publishing, 2004), 104–8; Johann Gottfried Herder, “How philosophy can become more universal and useful for the benefit of the people?” *Philosophical writings*, ed. by Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3–32.

²¹ Haym has summarized this program under the label of “Demopädie”, education of the people as opposed to “education of the educated”, Haym, *Herder*, I, 112; cf. Dreitzel, “Herder’s politische Konzepte”, 274. Cf. also Haym, *Herder*, I, 355–356.

²² Johann Gottfried Herder, “Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769”, *Johann Gottfried Herder: Werke*, ed. by Wolfgang Pross, 3 vols (Munich and Vienna: Hanser, 1984–2002), I: *Herder und der Sturm und Drang 1764–1774* (1984), 355–465 (372–416). For a still valuable commentary on this text, in a biographical context, see Haym, *Herder*, I, 356–371. See also Horst Dreitzel, “Herders politische Konzepte”, *Johann Gottfried Herder, 1744–1803*, ed. by Gerhard Sauder (Hamburg: Meiner, 1987), 266–298 (267).

case in comparison with other individual cases was needed first.²³ Herder drafted plans of political reform for both the constitution of the town of Riga and the provinces of Livland and Courland.²⁴ Livland, Herder argued, was currently nothing but “a province of barbarism and luxury, ignorance, pretended taste, freedom and slavery”.²⁵ The main challenge for a reformer in Livland (as well as Courland) was to “destroy this barbarism, oust out ignorance, spread freedom and culture” by becoming “a second Zwingli, Calvin and Luther of this province”.²⁶ For understanding the case of Riga specifically, it was necessary first to grasp the causes of the waning of the old Hanseatic spirit all over the Baltic region. The old “freedom” was gone, what was there instead was a confusion of different powers: “empress and town, court and town; officers of the crown and those of the town; titular councillors and the town; nobility and the town, parasites (*Schmaruzer*) and the town; town councillors and the town – what a state! (*Zustand*)”.²⁷ The town could only become “happy”, Herder insisted, if it stopped being “a Respublica in a republ. (sic!)”, and would become a “servant with privileges and ranks” (*Dienerin mit Vorzüge und Range*). “The town’s special institutions, liberties, departments and force (*Gewalt*) should be preserved”, but the town council should be led by an imperial president and the town soldiers should become servants of the crown.²⁸

Herder also mused about the reform of the Russian empire in his *Journal* and envisaged to write a book entitled *Über die wahre Kultur eines Volks und insonderheit Rußlands*, which he hoped to send to the empress in order to guide her reforms.²⁹ He celebrated Peter the Great’s bold, even childish innovative spirit and passion for imitation, fundamentally approving of his reform ideas. Yet, he also insisted that it was the task of the next monarchs and reformers to “make the forces of a young half-savage nation into an “original people” (*Original Volk*)”.³⁰ This was possible only

²³ Herder, “Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769”, 372–373, 410–439.

²⁴ For a commentary on these plans, see Günther Arnold, “Riga, Livland und Russland im Schaffen Herders”, *Johann Gottfried Herder und die deutschsprachige Literatur seiner Zeit. Beiträge der 1. Rigaer Fachtagung zur deutschsprachigen Literatur im Baltikum*, 14. bis 17. September 1994, ed. by Claus Altmayer and Armands Gutmanis (Riga, 1997), 20–36.

²⁵ Herder, “Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769”, 373.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 373, 409.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 415.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 415.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 410–412. On his dedication in working on this draft still in Nantes as well as on his sources for Russian history, see Arnold, “Riga, Livland und Russland”, 31–32; cf. Dreitzel, “Herders politische Konzepte”, 268.

³⁰ Herder, “Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769”, 366–367.

through “culture” and “improvement of morals” (*Verbesserung der Sitten*). No external legislation or direct “orders” could do justice to this task. What was needed was the formation of morals (*Bildung der Sitten*) based on a thorough and differentiating study of the existing morals.³¹ Russia’s heterogeneity had to be recognized clearly: it consisted of “fully civilized, half-civilized, and savage regions” (*ganz cultivierte, halb cultivierte und wilde Gegende*).³² No other European country could hence serve as a direct example for it. Rather, one had to look to the Eastern empires like Persia, Assyria, Egypt, China, and Japan. Each of Russia’s regions had to have its own laws appropriate to its “level of culture”: while the sea coast of Russia in the Northwest was “fully cultivated (*ganz gesittet*), the inner lands were “half-cultivated” (*halbgesittet*) and the borderlands fully uncultivated (*wild*).³³ Above all, it was not to be expected that by reforming the morals of the court, it would be possible to reform the country or indeed “gradually move towards freedom” – much more could be expected from the positive example of different provinces, and even more so from that of “single families”.³⁴

Herder was highly critical of Catherine’s specific reform plans, particularly her instruction for the new code of Russian law (1767), hoping to rectify things by catching “Catherine’s ear” at some point.³⁵ He believed that Catherine was wrongly applying Montesquieu’s theory of the nature and principles of government, assuming that Russia was a monarchy based on the principle of honor.³⁶ Since Montesquieu himself had paid rather little attention to Russia, his neat distinction between only three types of government (monarchies, republics, and despotisms) invited such false applications. For Herder, the government of the main territory of Russia was a clear-cut example of an “aristocratic despotism” where the empress herself was submitted to the despotism of the *grandees* and the *senat*. In a situation where there had never been proper laws in Russia, it was ridiculous to regard the *senat* as a “depository of laws”. Accordingly, the Russian principle of government was slavish fear and hope, flattery in order

³¹ *Ibid.*, 410. Cf. Dreitzel, ‘Herders politische Konzepte’, 287, and Konrad Bittner, ‘Herders Beurteilung der russischen Politik im 18. Jahrhundert’, *Im Geiste Herders: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum 150. Todestage J. G. Herders*, ed. by Erich Keyser, Marburger Ostforschungen, 1 (Kitzingen: Holzner-Verlag, 1953).

³² Herder, “Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769”, 412

³³ *Ibid.*, 412.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 411.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 411.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 426.

to become “great”, and crude “politesse” which was not based on a desire to distinguish oneself through one’s mores, but simply a “crude habit or deception”. No external legislation could hence bring along reform of government or indeed, society: the laws could not inspire honor, while they were respected only in a situation in which the nobles were guided by the principle of honor.³⁷ Hence, the only way open to Russia was one of “formation of the morals” through education and as well as the positive example of certain cultivated semi-autonomous regions.³⁸

Already in the 1760s, Herder began to explore the genesis of the various forms of human culture (arts, language, religion, morality) from the interaction between the forces (*Kräfte*) of the human soul and the external environment.³⁹ In his *Fragmente Über die neuere deutsche Literatur* (1766–69) and later in his prize-winning *Über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1772), he developed the rudiments of his theory of language as both a cognitive instrument and the trans-generational reservoir of the different experiences of its speakers. Language, he argued, was the crucial determining element of national thinking. From this insight, he also derived a program for the Germans to cherish and cultivate their language and literature.⁴⁰

Herder appreciated the accumulative character of human culture and saw civilization (*Bildung der Menschheit*) as a continuous process. Yet, he also mocked those philosophers who held that it constituted unilinear moral progress. In the early 1770s, Herder seemed to hold pessimistic views about the future of European civilized monarchies. In the most pessimistic of his works, his *Auch eine Philosophie der Menschheit zur Bildung der Menschheit*,⁴¹ Herder argued that civilization was determined predominantly by two underlying and intertwined subprocesses. First, he assumed that human language and culture in general were characterized

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 427.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 428–30.

³⁹ See, for example, his writings “Versuch einer Geschichte der lyrischen Dichtkunst”, “Über die neuere deutsche Literatur. Fragmente”, “Von deutscher Art und Kunst”, *Herder: Werke, I: Herder und der Sturm und Drang*, ed. by Pross (1984), and “Kritische Wälder: Viertes Wäldchen”, *Herder: Werke, II: Herder und die Anthropologie der Aufklärung*, ed. by Pross (1987), 57–240.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Johann Gottfried Herder, “Über die neuere deutsche Literatur”, in *Herder: Werke, II*, ed. by Pross (1987), 71–98. For a commentary, see Ulrich Gaier, *Herders Sprachphilosophie und Erkenntniskritik* (Stuttgart, Bad-Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1988), 34–65.

⁴¹ Johann Gottfried von Herder, “This too a philosophy for the formation of humanity: a contribution to many contributions of the century”, *Johann Gottfried von Herder: philosophical writings*, ed. by Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 272–358.

by a growing refinement, consisting in the gradual progress in the capacity for abstract reasoning. Second, he also explored the connections between this process and human sociability. Sociability was one of the enabling conditions of the process of cognitive refinement, yet it was also affected by this very process. The increasingly complex division of labor between humans in society and the corresponding increase in abstract thinking led to the weakening of the intensity of feeling, as well as undermined the efficacy of moral motivation. Through its pursuit of “eternal, ethereal truth”, philosophy had dissociated moral notions from their sensuous roots and hence rendered them motivationally powerless.⁴² This process, in turn, was attended by the rise of false consciousness, philosophers celebrating the new metropolitan forms of sociability as well as the highly abstract ideals of the “love of mankind”, while in fact the latter only led to the neglect or even scorn of one’s own language and customs.⁴³ The sensuous ways of thinking, mighty imagination, and powerful feelings of the early peoples formed a great contrast to modern lifeless politeness.⁴⁴

Beginning in the late 1760s, Herder grew increasingly skeptical of the prospect of reform in European monarchies. In the materials attached to his *Journal of my Travels in the Year 1769*, he even announced: “there is no fatherland, no citizens any more (in our European states)”⁴⁵ Modern technology had contributed to the rise of large sovereign states, the rulers of which were apt to make humans mere “cogs in the machine of the state”.⁴⁶ This development was reinforced by the corruption of international trade through “reason of state” thinking in the modern period. Even worse, the politicians of modern states knew only too well how to

⁴² I elaborate on this reading of Herder’s philosophy of history in my “Sociability, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism”.

⁴³ Herder, “This too a philosophy”, 321.

⁴⁴ Herder’s interest in folk culture and folk song is also grounded in his interest in the history of the human mind, and the interaction between the general cognitive and emotional development and human sociability, including moral agency. As landmarks of this interest, see his “Über den Ursprung der Sprache”, in *Herder: Werke, II*, ed. by Pross, 251–400, “Von deutscher Art und Kunst. Einige fliegende Blätter” containing his “Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker”, both in *Herder: Werke, I*, ed. by Pross, 477–572 and 477–525 and his famous *Volkslieder* (1777–1778), published as *Herder: Volkslieder, Übertragungen, Dichtungen*, in: *Herder: Werke in zehn Bänden*, III, ed. by Ulrich Gaier (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1990), 9–428.

⁴⁵ Johann Gottfried Herder, “Blätter zum ‘Journal der Reise’”, in *Herder: Werke, I*, ed. by Pross (1984), 466–473 (472).

⁴⁶ Herder, “This too a philosophy”, 319.

fraudulently present their aggressive foreign policy as guided by patriotism or cosmopolitanism.⁴⁷

Herder's critique of modern civilization, at the same time, was combined with his deep appreciation of the role of Christianity in European history. Even in the most pessimistic of his works, *Auch eine Philosophie*, he saw Christianity as a religion of a true, universal human sociability, thereby indicating his belief that transcending the original limited and partial sociability of national groups was both desirable as well as possible at a higher stage of cultural development.⁴⁸ Since his *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele* (1775–78), Herder explicitly posited that Christianity as a “humane religion” was the only true source of morality in modern times because it alone was capable of creating a *living* cognition that both “thinks and acts, lends force and resources for thinking and acting”.⁴⁹ True Christianity, in his view, was able to rectify the damage done by abstract modern philosophy, while keeping the positive elements of mankind's cognitive refinement (greater scope of cognition as well as affection). The aim of the Christian religion, for Herder, was to lead one “to love the great Creator in oneself, to love one's way into others, and then to follow this sure pull”.⁵⁰ At the same time, such cognition could only be achieved by preserving and cultivating one's natural inclinations or sensations, since it was only from the latter that true cognition arose and continued to live in. Among these sensations, Herder included both individual self-love and the individuals' love for their native language. Faithfulness to one's language, including the attempts to renew its poetic power through reconnection to and reflection on the sensuous origins of the concepts, was a *sine qua non* for morality for individuals and entire nations alike.⁵¹ This deep appreciation of one's national character had to ground a general educational program based on cultural exchange and benevolent emulation between nations. Herder accordingly also set out to determine the political implications of this idea, making calls for a new kind of state-led system of education and academies fostering true national spirit.⁵²

⁴⁷ This passage summarizes my “Sociability, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism”.

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Herder, “On the cognition and sensation”, in *Herder: philosophical writings*, ed. by Forster, 243. For the theological and metaphysical foundations of this account, see Claas Cordemann, *Herders Christlicher Monismus: eine Studie zur Grundlegung von Johann Gottfried Herders Christologie und Humanitätsideal* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

⁵⁰ Herder, “On the Cognition and Sensation”, 214.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁵² See Johann Gottfried Herder, “Vom Einfluß der Regierung auf die Wissenschaften, und der Wissenschaften auf die Regierung” (1780), *Herder: Werke in zehn Bänden*, II, ed.

In contrast to the ironical and pessimistic tenor of *This Too a Philosophy*, Herder in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–89), *Briefe, über die Beförderung der Humanität* (1793–97), as well as *Adrastea* (1801–03) explicated the different strands of modern philosophy of sociability to which his own thinking had been indebted throughout his life — from Cicero to Grotius, Leibniz, Shaftesbury, Fénelon, Barbeyrac, etc. In order to accommodate the different traditions these thinkers represented in his new system-theoretical approach, Herder coined the concept of humanity (*Humanität*).⁵³ As Ulrich Gaier has argued, this term was designed to capture both (1) the human capacity of appreciating and creating order among the elements of a system, as expressed by the universal human capacity for self-determination as well as for pursuing “fairness (reciprocity) and truth”, and (2) the goal of the historical process, a harmonious world system evolving from the purification of a “floating, merging chaos”, as expressed in the gradual achievement of international justice and peace.⁵⁴

At the same time, Herder also continued to view “nations” as key agents of human history, now also paying attention to the question about the relationship of the nation to the state. In one of the most pregnant and controversial passages of his entire work, Herder argued: “the most natural state is [...] the one people with one national character. This maintains itself in it for millennia and can, if it matters to its native prince, be developed in the most natural way: for a people is like a plant of nature, like a family, only one with several branches. Nothing is so contrary to the purpose of

Rainer Wisbet and Klaus Pradel (Frankfurt: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, 1997) and *idem*, “Idee zum ersten patriotischen Institut für den Allgemeingeist Deutschlands” (1787), in *Herder: Werke in zehn Bänden*, II, 565–80. On these projects, see Alexander Schmidt, “Learning and government: German responses to Rousseau’s *Premier discours*”, *Modern Intellectual History* (forthcoming).

⁵³ On this approach, see Ulrich Gaier, “Von nationalen Klassik zur Humanität. Konzepte der Vollendung bei Herder”, *Nationen und Kulturen. Zum 250. Geburtstag Johann Gottfried Herders*, ed. by Regine Otto (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1996), 49–64 (62).

⁵⁴ For Herder’s concept of *Humanität*, see also Hans Dietrich Irmscher, “Herders Humanitätsbriefe”, *Johann Gottfried Herder: Werke in zehn Bänden*, VII: *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität*, ed. by Hans Dietrich Irmscher (1991), 809–840 (817–837) and Hans Adler, “Herder’s Concept of Humanity”, *A Companion to the works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, ed. by Hans Adler and Wulf Koepke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), 93–116.

government, as the unnatural aggrandizement of states, the wild mixing of types of men and nations under one scepter.”⁵⁵

This passage has often been read as revealing Herder’s commitment to the idea of a nation state. Yet, at a closer inspection we see that he in fact equals “natural government (or state)” with premodern state forms only, seeing modern states as “artificial states”. For a modern situation, Herder gave only a few guidelines. First, as is also revealed in the passage above, he very clearly warned that the purpose of government could not be the enlargement of the state. Second, he explicitly denounced Joseph II’s attempts to homogenize administrative language in the Austrian empire.⁵⁶ Yet he was much more ambivalent as to whether this also gave a license for the reorganization of the multinational empires into what are now known as nation states.⁵⁷

What he was clearly opposed to, in any case, was the idea that man would always need the sovereign state as a “master”. As soon as a people possesses its own reason and knows how to govern itself, he argued, “the government has to weaken itself or finally disappear”.⁵⁸ If read carefully, this claim rules out the sovereign nation state as a desirable goal for Herder. Even if such a state would be “natural” in the sense of being based on one single national character, such a goal would not be achievable in modern times without tyrannizing or directly threatening minorities. We should not, however, conclude from this that Herder proposed anarchism as a solution instead. Most likely, what he had in mind was national self-government. For Herder, “in the end laws have to rule and not princes”, hence, it is quite possible that he envisioned loose multinational federations, possibly even a union of nations at the European level, as the desirable goal of political development.⁵⁹ This is of course only to shift the question to another level. He did at the same time acknowledge that peoples desired social and

⁵⁵ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, ed. by Bernhard Suphan (Berlin: Weidmann, 1887), *Herders Sämtliche Werke*, xiii, 384. The translation is taken from Eggel, Liebich, Mancini-Griffoli, “Was Herder a Nationalist?”, 48.

⁵⁶ Herder, *Ideen*, 322.

⁵⁷ Eggel, Liebich, Mancini-Griffoli, “Was Herder a Nationalist?”, 62–64.

⁵⁸ Herder, *Ideen* (draft version), 456. This was written as a critical reply to Immanuel Kant’s “Idee zu einer allgemeiner Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht”. For the Kant-Herder debate, see Hans Dieter Irmscher, “Die Geschichtsphilosophische Kontroverse zwischen Kant und Herder”, *Hamann, Kant, Herder*, Acta des vierten Internationalen Hamann-Kolloquiums im Herder-Institut zu Marburg/Lahn 1985, ed. by Bernhard Gajek (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1987).

⁵⁹ See the illuminating discussion in Eggel, Liebich, Mancini-Griffoli, “Was Herder a Nationalist?”, 72–74.

political life in the vernacular. Herder had no institutional answers to the question of how could such self-government be organized, provided there were many nations living next to each other on one territory. Yet he did argue that national patriotism can be and must be reconciled with true cosmopolitanism, understood as commitment to the ideal of *Humanität*.

We find Herder developing these ideas most systematically in his essay *Haben wir noch das Vaterland der Alten?* (1795). Bearing nearly the same title as an essay that Herder had written thirty years earlier in Riga,⁶⁰ this essay explores the formation of the relevant community of patriotism, and its specific moral and political content. As Herder explains in the first section of this essay, the “ancient public” essentially meant a community or “circle” of humans engaged in communication, understanding, judging, teaching, and forming (*bilden*) each other through language.⁶¹ Language was the key element in the formation of such a circle. Yet, returning to a narrowly “national public” was neither possible nor desirable. Thanks to the adoption and increasing purification of the Christian religion, Europeans had advanced to a new level of moral thinking, one captured in the spiritual commitment to the rules of fairness (*Billigkeit*) and forgiving love. Originally united through Christianity, but ever more also through mutual needs, inventions, modern science, and academic learning, Europe had developed into a “community of nations”, its nations sympathizing with each other in “rivalry and peace, love and suffering”. Germans alone were not playing an appropriate part in this community. Separated geographically and politically, Germans were “alienated from their own souls”.⁶² Their upper ranks were despising their supposedly “barbarian language” and accordingly adopted a foreign language (the French language), education, and morals.⁶³ Rectifying the situation required, above all, a Christian reappraisal, as well as cultivation of their own linguistic-cultural heritage, through dialogue with other European nations and with the conscious aim to contribute to European culture.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ “Haben wir noch jetzt die Vaterland und Publikum der Alten?” Herder, *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität*, in *Herder: Werke in zehn Bänden*, VII, ed. by Irmscher, 301–38. For English translation, see: Herder, “Do We Still Have a Fatherland?” in *idem, Another philosophy of history*, ed. by Pellerin and Evrigenis. Since there is an English translation only from an excerpt of this text, it is necessary also to quote from a German edition. See also Irmscher’s commentary on the origins of this essay, Herder, *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität*, in *Herder: Werke*, VII, ed. by Irmscher, 809–12.

⁶¹ Herder, *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität*, 304.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 328.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 328.

For Herder, linguistic-cultural activity did not exhaust the meaning of patriotism in modern times; morality also demanded practical efficacy and action. From ancient times, patriotism had been seen as a central moral and political virtue. Yet what could be the relevant kind of “fatherland” in a modern society? In the second part of the essay, Herder explored the object and psychological nature of ancient and modern patriotism, tackling both the domestic as well as international implications of patriotism.⁶⁵ His key idea was that modern nations could and had to recreate the distinctive republican elements of the Greek and Roman patriotism, while “purifying” these sentiments from animosity to foreign nations. Hence what had to be borrowed from the ancients was the “moral tendency of the name of the fatherland”, i.e. the idea of the fatherland as a normative goal to be pursued by various generations through collective effort. This ideal could in modern times only be “the institutions or the good constitution (*Einrichtung, die gute Verfassung*) under which we would most like to live with what is dearest to us”.⁶⁶ It was a distinct form of *state* (*Staat*) that was the core of the moral ideal of the “fatherland”: “Morally we consider ourselves happy in a state where under a lawful freedom and security we do not make ourselves blush, where we do not waste our efforts, where we and those dear to us are not abandoned but are free to do all our duties as worthy, active sons of fatherland who are recognised and awarded in the eyes of the mother. The Greeks and Romans were right to (think) that no other human achievement exceeds that of establishing such a union, or strengthening, renewing, purifying, and preserving it.”⁶⁷

Essentially, Herder posited that the core ideal of modern patriotism was a republic. This ideal encompassed freedom and equality of the citizens under the rule of law, as well as demanded freedom of opinion in the public press.⁶⁸ Such an ideal, Herder argued, would motivate people to do their best so that the state would be “as it should be” in all important respects. Using the metaphors of “mother” and “children” and associating self-respect with the requirement of the state “not to abandon us”, Herder called the state to take responsibility for guaranteeing everyone not just the formal opportunity, but also the means for action, as essential for self-

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 331f.; translation from: Herder, “Do We Still Have the Fatherland of the Ancients?” (1795), 110.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 333; translation from: Herder, “Do We Still Have the Fatherland of the Ancients?” (1795), 113.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; translation from: Herder, “Do We Still Have the Fatherland of the Ancients?” (1795), 113.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 333, 331.

respect.⁶⁹ As Herder explained in another essay in *Humanitätsbriefe*, from this viewpoint the state was not so much an instrument of coercion, but “the eye of general reason, the ear and heart of general fairness and goodness”.⁷⁰ It was not clear, however, how this ideal was to be achieved in practice. What was clear was that there was no reason to regard the existing German territorial states, or indeed the *Reich*, as an embodiment of this ideal.

Making a call for the reconnection with the linguistic-cultural heritage of one’s nation, as well as for pursuing the goal of national self-government, Herder did not lose sight of the other danger – the possibility that this very process might come to endanger what he regarded as the central task and duty of Christian morality: peace. For precluding this kind of development, an understanding of “when patriotism stopped to be a virtue” was vital.⁷¹ Herder’s main strategy for clarifying this question was to explore the mechanisms for the rise of aggressive psychological propensities in the human mind and the ways in which states were apt to instrumentalize the latter. For this purpose, it was most important to realize that humans were necessarily prone to delusion (*Wahn*) and prejudices (*Vorurteile*). Our delusions were characteristically strong in the area of the things relating to ourselves – our person, rank, nation.⁷² Succumbing to a “mania of pride about the fatherland, religion, lineage and ancestors” (*Wahn von Vaterlands-Religions-Geschlechts-Ahnenstolze*), he argued, was the problem of nearly every ancient nation. As the case of the Greek and Roman patriotism revealed, this mania was prone to develop particularly strongly in those communities that aspired to higher moral standards and regarded themselves as chosen by gods.⁷³

The same kind of tendency, as Herder pointed out in another of his *Humanitätsbriefe*, was even more vicious in modern times, as it was now the “coldest calculations of reason of state” that were “warmed up” by an appeal to patriotism. Patriotism, even moral patriotism, had all too often turned into a cloak for the “most tangled, most loathsome state interests, of personal presumptions and of state trickeries”.⁷⁴ Understanding these

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 333.

⁷⁰ “Ist der Staat das, was er sein soll, *das Auge der allgemeinen Vernunft, das Ohr und Herz der allgemeinen Billigkeit und Güte*, so wird er jede dieser Stimmen (voices of humanity) hören und die Tätigkeit der Menschen nach ihren verschiedenen Neigungen, Empfindbarkeiten, Schwächen und Bedürfnissen aufwecken und ermuntern.” Herder, *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität*, 124.

⁷¹ Herder, *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität*, 131.

⁷² *Ibid*, 244.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 112.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 412.

structural reasons for the corruption of patriotism, however, was not to lead to discrediting patriotism altogether, but only to “purifying” (*läutern*) and redirecting it. While it was not possible to completely eradicate delusions or prejudices in ourselves, Herder argued, we could seek their “suppression, restraint and neutralization”. Patriotism necessarily had to “more and more clean and purify itself of dross”.⁷⁵ True patriotism was not directed to one’s existing “machine-like state”, but to the “ideal” of fatherland. This ideal, he insisted, was demanded by our very nature, our Christian vocation. It was vital to understand that “the existence of each human being (was) woven together with the whole species”.⁷⁶ A sharp contrast, Herder insisted, should hence be drawn between the existing machine-like states and the ideal fatherlands loved by the people: “Cabinets may deceive each other, political machines may be moved against each other until one blows the other to pieces. But *fatherlands* do not move against each other like this; they lie quietly side-by-side and assist each other as families do [...] Fatherlands against fatherlands in a bloody struggle – that is the worst barbarism of the human language.”⁷⁷

The struggle of the Baltic Germans against Russification in the 1860s

The 1860s is regarded as a particularly pregnant period in the history of Russia’s Baltic provinces. An intense interaction between internal and external factors produced distinctive dynamics influencing political life.⁷⁸ First, there was an economic and trade upswing in the provinces, including the gradual rise of the land-owning peasantry following the agrarian reforms of the 1850s. Second, there were rapid social and cultural changes, involving the development of a Baltic German press and a certain Baltic

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 722; translation from: Herder, “Letters on the Advancement of Humanity. Tenth Collection”, *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Foster, 406.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 752f.; translation from: Herder, “Letters on the Advancement of Humanity. Tenth Collection”, *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Foster, 422.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 337–38; translation from: Herder, “Do We Still Have the Fatherland of the Ancients?” (1795), *Herder: Another Philosophy of History and Selected Political Writings*, ed. by Evrigenis and Pellerin, 109–17 (116f.).

⁷⁸ Michael Garleff, “Relations between the political representation of the Baltic provinces and the Russian government, 1850–1917”, *Governments, Ethnic Groups and Political Representation*, Comparative Studies on Government and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850–1940, IV (Darmouth: New York University Press, 1993), 201–38 (202).

identity.⁷⁹ There also emerged debates on the constitutional reform both in the Baltic press as well as the provincial diets. Third, these processes were paralleled by the establishment of the Estonian and Latvian vernacular newspapers, and the emergence of national consciousness among the Estonian and Latvian populations.

Important external factors influencing these internal developments were Russian journalism as well as the politics of Russian central government, which in turn were conditioned by international developments. Following the Paris Peace Treaty of 1856, Russia embarked on a course of liberal reforms, which included a judicial reform, liberation of peasants, and a reorganization of the system of self-government. A turning point in this process was constituted through the Polish uprising of 1863, which acquired a specific meaning in light of international developments, most importantly, the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy (1861) and the battle of Königgratz (1866), leading to the subsequent foundation of the *Norddeutscher Bund* (1867). The question of the internal organization and identity of the Russian Empire – imperial or national – became pertinent. The Russian press began to take special interest in the borderlands, and in the Baltic provinces in particular. Most importantly, it drew its own conclusions from the growing appeal to the “national principle” in the Western Europe, beginning to advocate the transformation of the empire into a modern “nation state” (*Nationalstaat*).⁸⁰ This agenda, in turn, was viewed as one of Russification by the Baltic Germans.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Most importantly, the monthly *Baltische Monatsschrift* was founded in 1859, following the example of *Preussische Jahrbücher*. In 1860, *Revalsche Zeitung* was founded, while *Rigasche Zeitung* began to discuss politics in 1861. *Dorpater Zeitung für Rechtswissenschaft* was founded in 1868, Wittram, *Liberalismus baltischer Literaten*, 5–7, 55.

⁸⁰ For different kinds of reform ideas with regard to the Russian empire, see Georg von Rauch, “Der Russische Reichsgedanke im Spiegel der politischen Bewusstseins der baltischen Provinzen” (1954), idem, *Aus der baltischen Geschichte*, Beiträge zur baltischen Geschichte, 9 (Hanover-Döhren, 1980), 487–518.

⁸¹ The concept of Russification has been questioned from a number of viewpoints over the last decades, see e.g. Gert von Pistohlkors, “‘Russifizierung’ und die Grundlagen der deutschbaltischen Russophobie”, Gert von Pistohlkors, *Vom Geist der Autonomie. Aufsätze zur baltischen Geschichte*, ed. by Michael Garleff (Köln: Mare Baltikum, 1995), 55–68, or the articles in *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*, ed. by E.C. Thaden (Princeton, 1984). Using this term in the context of the study of the history of political thought, however, is still appropriate. Although “Russification” certainly was an ideological construct or ‘weapon’, it emerged in an ideological war, which for the historical agents was constituted through perceived threats from an “enemy” – Russian public opinion and through the latter’s influence, possibly also the central government.

The issue of Russification in the 1860s had a prehistory. In 1832, the Baltic Lutheran Churches (*Landeskirchen*) were incorporated into the Lutheran Church of Russia, acquiring only a subordinate (“tolerated”) status next to the imperial Russian Orthodox Church in Russia.⁸² This involved also a prohibition on all ministrations by Protestant Clergy to members of the Orthodox Church. An Orthodox see was established in Riga in 1836 and the early 1840s witnessed mass conversions among the Estonian and Latvian peasants, spurned by rumors about the possibility of gaining land through it. Difficulties emerged, when the first converts retracted their decision or wished their children to be baptized as Protestants, yet found it forbidden by law. By the early 1860s, a reconversion movement was well under way,⁸³ and the Baltic Germans searched for ways to further foster it. The landed estates (*Ritterschaften*) sought to defend their ecclesiastical rights in the provinces, while also increasingly emphasizing the practical grievances rising from the application of the imperial church law.⁸⁴

Lurking behind the confessional issue was the question of the “nationality” of the peasant population, as well as of the Baltic provinces in general. Indeed, the Baltic Germans themselves increasingly emphasized the need for political reform in the Baltic provinces, searching for ways to achieve a certain unity between its various estates and nationalities.⁸⁵ The Russian press noticed this. Particularly provocative for the press was the sermon of Bishop Ferdinand Walter, the superintendent of Livland at the Livonian *Landtag*. Celebrating the Germans’ success in solving the national ques-

⁸² The summary of this process in this section draws on Garleff, “Relations between the political representation”, 202–203; cf. Reinhard Wittram, *Baltische Geschichte. Die Ostseelände Livland, Estland, Kurland 1180–1918* (München: Oldenburg, 1954), 184–85.

⁸³ Garleff, “Relations between the political representation”, 202–204; see also Heinrich Schaudinn, *Das baltische Deutschtum und Bismarcks Reichsgründung* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1932), 7–8; Gert von Pistohlkors, ““Die Russische Sphäre: sie lähmt und zertücket; sie verwaltet nicht: sie tödtet”: Die Livländische Konversionsbewegung in Schirrens *Livländische Antwort* und in den *Materialien* des Baron Stael von Holstein”, *Anthropologien der Endlichkeit. Stationen einer literarischen Denkfigur seit der Aufklärung*, ed. by Friederike Felicitas Günther and Torsten Hoffmann (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011), 357–389.

⁸⁴ Garleff, “Relations between the political representation”, 202–205; Wittram, *Baltische Geschichte*, 186.

⁸⁵ For reform proposals, see Garleff, “Relations between the political representation”, 208–211, and Gert von Pistohlkors, “Inversion of ethnic group status in the Baltic region: governments and rural ethnic conflicts in Russia’s Baltic provinces and in the independent states of Estonia and Latvia, 1850–1940”, *Roots of rural ethnic mobilisation, Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850–1940*, vol. VII, ed. by David Howell in collaboration with G. v. Pistohlkors and Ellen Wiegandt (Dartmouth: New York University Press, 1993), 169–220 (177–179, 182).

tion in Prussia, Walter regretted the fact that “from an unclear piety to the fractions of peoples about to be lost to history”, Baltic Germans had attempted to “preserve these peoples’ nationality”, instead of supporting their “striving for Germanization”, one that was fully justified “by nature as well as their situation” (*Lage*). Walter hence invited the nobility to do their best in rectifying the matter and to collaborate in this respect as closely as possible with the “paternal ethnic group (*Volkstamm*) in its homeland”. It was nothing less than their “humane” duty to do so, since “the national [...] and confessional equalisation with their lords” (*nationale Gleichstellung mit ihren Herren*) also meant access to civilization.⁸⁶

Walter’s sermon touched a sore spot of the Russian slavophiles. The Polish uprising in 1863 had raised fears with regard to other possible separation movements, while Bismarck’s policies of Prussian nation-building pointed to the “German” provinces in the Baltics as particularly suspect in this respect. Walter’s positive references to the processes of Prussia as well as his program of Germanization seemed to confirm these fears. Provoked by this sermon, the Russian liberal and editor-in-chief of *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, Mikhail Katkov, and the slavophiles Ivan Aksakov and Juri Samarin associated with the newspaper *Den*, launched a massive journalistic campaign against the special position of the Baltic provinces in the Russian Empire. Their critique concerned three problems in particular. First, they compared the Russian peasant liberation reform of 1861 with those of the Baltic provinces, celebrating in particular the fixed price of peasant land in Russia and the emancipation of Russian peasants from the police and justice power of the manor lord. Second, they attacked the very privileges of the ruling nationality (Germans), which made the Russians citizens of a second order in these provinces. And finally, they detected the tendency of separatism and a craving for Germanization (*Germanisierungsgelüste*) in the Baltic provinces.⁸⁷

The answers of the Baltic Germans to the Russian press reveal that to a certain extent the Russian critics had hit the mark. Different newspapers

⁸⁶ Cited from Pistohlkors, “Konversionen”, 375, see also Wittram, *Baltische Geschichte*, 186; Schaudinn, *Das baltische Deutschtum*, 8–9, Pistohlkors, “Die Russische Sphäre”, 375. A good overview of the issue of Germanization from the viewpoint of the Germans of the “motherland” and from the Baltic Germans more generally is in Schaudinn, *Das baltische Deutschtum*, 43–49.

⁸⁷ This passage summarizes the overview of Schaudinn, *Das baltische Deutschtum*, 73–79. It needs to be emphasized though that there were important differences between the views of these different Russian journalists, see e.g. Berkholz’s sympathetic reconstruction of Mikhail Katkov’s position in Anon. [Berkholz], “Livländische Correspondenz”, 474–486.

repeatedly took up the question of nationality. If there is one common denominator in the various reactions by the Baltic Germans to the attacks of the Russian press in the 1860s, it is the emphasis on the high level of German and European culture in comparison with Russian culture.⁸⁸ Changing a higher culture for a lower one, it was argued, could not happen voluntarily, and if it happened through the force of laws or thanks to the material benefits associated with it, it was bound to have a bad effect on one's character.⁸⁹ The Baltic Germans accordingly classified the Russian attacks as examples of unbound "national nonsense" (*Nationalitätsschwindelei*)⁹⁰, national or racist fanaticism (*Nationalfanatismus, Racenfanatismus*).⁹¹

With regard to the Estonian and Latvian populations (the so-called *Nationalen* in the Baltic German vocabulary), there was a relative consensus that they were already Germanized culturally through the Lutheran religion and German juridical system, even if the vast majority of them had until now preserved their mother tongue.⁹² Two competing, yet fundamentally similar future visions were proposed regarding the present situation. As opposed to the ideas of the first half of the nineteenth century, the mood was becoming favorable to the idea that changing the language was beneficial for the nationals' "formation" (*Bildung*).⁹³ Alternatively, it was envisioned that a certain new German-dominated Baltic "political nationality" would emerge, provided the social issues between different nationalities were resolved. In an important article of 1864 in *Baltische Monatsschrift*, Georg Berkholz suggested that a Swiss solution in which there was a common political nationality based on an understanding of a shared history and political and cultural traditions, yet combining different "ethnological nationalities" with different languages and folk customs, was also conceivable in the Baltic context.⁹⁴ Drawing on Hegel's authority,

⁸⁸ Georg Berkholz, "Zur Nationalitätenfrage", *BM*, 9 (1864), 568–575; Jegór von Sivers, *Appell an die europäische Oeffentlichkeit gegen die russischen Zeitungen. Zur Charakteristik der Moskauer und Petersburger Russifizierungsversuche in den Ostseeprovinzen. Von einem Deutschen der als geborner Livländer russischer Staatsangehörigkeit ist* (Leipzig, 1765), 3–4. The pamphlet was simultaneously published in French in Brussels.

⁸⁹ Sivers, *Appell an die europäische Oeffentlichkeit*, 15, cf. Anon. [Berkholz], "Livländische Correspondenz", 477–479.

⁹⁰ Sivers, *Appell an die europäische Oeffentlichkeit*, 20.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁹² Berkholz, "Zur Nationalitätenfrage", 574; cf. Anon. [Berkholz], "Livländische Correspondenz", 474–486 (483–486) and Sivers, *Appell an die europäische Oeffentlichkeit*, 9.

⁹³ Wittram, *Liberalismus baltischer Literaten*, 50–51, 55–56, 82–83.

⁹⁴ In an earlier article he had suggested the same solution with regard to the entire Russian empire, "Livländische Correspondenz", *BM*, 9 (1864), 481.

he maintained that there simply was not enough intellectual capacity in such small peoples to uphold their own higher education and culture. The Latvian and Estonian languages would not die out, yet they would never become those of educated communication.⁹⁵

A further twist was added to the debate when in 1867 the imperial government decreed Russian the official language of the crown's authorities in the provinces. In the same year, Tsar Alexander II expressed the wish for the representatives of the Baltic estates to "belong to the one Russian family and to form an indivisible part of Russia".⁹⁶ While the tsar himself was at first wavering in taking up this course, things became more ominous when the use of German by the provincial authorities, which was regarded as a constitutional right by the Baltic Germans, was described as being dependent upon the tsar's goodwill. This led to a big campaign of petitions known as the *grosse Aktion*, during which the representatives of the Livonian *Ritterschaft* requested that the tsar reinstate the repeatedly attested and chartered rights of their provinces. The petitions were rejected by Alexander II in a resolution edited by himself, referring to the preamble of the Provincial Code of 1845 in which it was settled that both the imperial laws as well as the provincial laws differing from the former drew their validity from the sovereign power.⁹⁷

With the tightening of the regulations of censorship in 1865, the debate was carried abroad.⁹⁸ A number of Baltic Germans, including the liberal journalist of Riga Julius Eckardt⁹⁹ and the Livonian noblemen Jegór Julius

⁹⁵ Berkholz, "Zur Nationalitätenfrage", 573–575. The same idea was also proposed by Heinrich von Tiesenhausen in 1879, Reinhard Wittram, *Meinungskämpfe im baltischen Deutschland während der Reformepoche des 19. Jahrhundert. Festschrift der Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde zu Riga zu ihrer Hundertjahrfeier am 6. Dezember 1934* (Riga: Kommissionsverlag von Bruhns, 1934), 57 and 123–124, and Wittram, *Liberalismus baltischer Literaten*, 48. Julius Eckardt also distanced himself in a similar vein from the "ethnological prejudices" for the sake of a geographical concept of identity, Wittram, *Liberalismus baltischer Literaten*, 84.

⁹⁶ Garleff, "Relations between the political representation", 202, 213.

⁹⁷ Schaudinn, *Das baltische Deutschland*, 98–99; Garleff, "Relations between the political representation", 213–214.

⁹⁸ On censorship, see Wittram, *Liberalismus baltischer Literaten*, 52, 78, and Wittram, *Baltische Geschichte*, 189.

⁹⁹ Eckardt translated Juri Samarin's *Okrainy Rossii* (1868) into German and provided a lengthy commentary on it, see Juri Samarin, *Juri Samarins Anklage gegen die Ostseeprovinzen Russlands*, transl. (and with a commentary) by Julius Eckardt (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1869). He also engaged in a number of debates in Prussia, most importantly among them with Heinrich Treitschke, see Schaudinn, *Das baltische Deutschland*, 85–87; Michael Garleff, "Julius Eckardt in Deutschland", *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 33:4 (1984), 534–550 and *idem*, "Julius Eckardt (1836–1908) als baltischer Historiker und

Sivers and Woldemar von Bock, moved to Prussia to fight for the “Baltic cause” there. Particularly Woldemar von Bock, the former vice president of the Livonian High Court (*Hofgericht*) who had become famous for his “proposal of four points” submitted to the Livonian Diet (*Landtag*) in 1862, managed to draw wide attention to his activities.¹⁰⁰ Bock was a staunch defender of the united Baltic Diet, referring to the need to consolidate the German estates (nobility and burghers) in the Baltic provinces, so as to be able to resist Russian centralization. Indeed, he continued defending his program in his *Livländische Beiträge* published in Prussia (1867–71),¹⁰¹ openly admitting that his example for the “United Baltic Duchies” was the Grand Duchy of Finland.¹⁰² As Georg von Rauch has suggested, thereby he proposed a federal vision of the Empire, one that could be traced back to the constitutional draft of Alexander I of 1819 and to a sketch of a constitution for “united Livonia” (*vereinte Livlande*), drafted with a circle of students at the University of Tartu in 1861.¹⁰³

It was Bock’s separatism in particular that was picked up by Juri Samarin in the first installments of his famous *Okrainy Rossii* (*Borderlands of Russia*).¹⁰⁴ Bock’s, Eckardt’s, and Sivers’ writings, Samarin argued, amply revealed that the Baltic Germans’ true political goal was the formation of a new “fullblown organism of German nationality”, which in turn served as the basis for an institutional separation.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the Livonian nobility

politischer Publizist in Riga”, *Geisteswissenschaften und Publizistik im Baltikum des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Norbert Angermann, Wilhelm Lenz and Konrad Maier, Schriften der baltischen historischen Kommission (Münster: LIT, 2011), 313–336.

¹⁰⁰ For Bock’s reform proposal of 1862 and his activities in Prussia, see Schaudinn, *Das baltische Deutschtum*, 100–104; cf. Garleff, “Relations between the political representation”, 209–10. On Bock’s relationships to the *Literaten* of Riga, see Wittram, *Meinungskämpfe*, 27–28, and Wittram, *Liberalismus baltischer Literaten*, 18–19, 32.

¹⁰¹ *Livländische Beiträge: zur Verbreitung gründlicher Kunde von der protestantischen Landeskirche und dem deutschen Landesstaate in den Ostseeprovinzen Russlands, von ihrem guten Rechte und von Ihrem Kampf um Gewissensfreiheit*, vols. 1–2 (Berlin, 1867–1868), Neue Folge (Leipzig, 1869–1870).

¹⁰² Georg von Rauch, “Der Russische Reichsgedanke im Spiegel der politischen Bewusstseins der baltischen Provinzen” (1954), *idem*, *Aus der baltischen Geschichte*, Beiträge zur baltischen Geschichte, 9 (Hanover-Döhren, 1980), 487–518,

¹⁰³ Rauch, “Der Russische Reichsgedanke”, 506.

¹⁰⁴ On Samarin, see Edward C. Thaden, “Samarin’s ‘Okrainy Rossii’ and official policy in the Baltic provinces”, *Russian Review*, 33:4 (1974), 405–415, and *idem*, “Jurij Fedorovich Samarin (1819–1876) as a Baltic historian”, *Geisteswissenschaften und Publizistik im Baltikum des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Norbert Angermann, Wilhelm Lenz and Konrad Maier, Schriften der baltischen historischen Kommission (Münster: LIT, 2011), 137–156.

¹⁰⁵ Samarin, *Juri Samarins Anklage*, 160–161.

was forced to officially disavow Bock's writings in 1868.¹⁰⁶ Samarin's attack provoked a new wave of answers from the Livonian authors, among them Julius Eckardt and Carl Schirren. In his *Livländische Antwort*, Schirren insisted in particular on the pivotal importance of legal contracts between Peter I and the Baltic provinces. The new Russian ideas of race, blood, and instinct of nationality, Schirren argued, sharply clashed with the German ideas of law, autonomy, and freedom of conscience. There could hence be no common ground between Russians and Germans. The Baltic provinces had a contractual relationship to the Russian Empire, and they would hold on to their right as long as they could. Only the representatives of the German nation in these provinces had the right to reform their institutions.¹⁰⁷

Schirren's literary power towered above Bock's, but not everyone shared the political line he represented. While Berkholz had voiced a rather favourable view of the possible development of a common Russian "political nationality", provided the Russian high culture continued developing and the people's rights and liberties were taken seriously by the central government,¹⁰⁸ there were those who continued openly sympathising with Bock's reformist and federative vision even after his disavowal by the Livonian nobility. Jegór von Sivers, in particular, acknowledged his continuing support for Bock's vision, attempting to demonstrate that the Livonian nobility had not truly disavowed him. With passion, Sivers proclaimed himself never to "give up a friendship through conviction, through true Russian patriotism because of truth", while those friends whom one would "lose through truth", were really to be guarded against anyway.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, as I will try to show below, in his own writings Sivers developed the reformist and federative vision much more than Bock did, providing also a philosophical underpinning for it. I will argue below that it was precisely this task that Sivers set out to complete in turning to Herder's political philosophy.

Jegór von Sivers' Herderian cosmopolitanism

Published in Berlin in 1869, Sivers' *Humanität und Nationalität* was a direct contribution to the debate on the Russification of Russia's Baltic provinces. At the same time, it was also a continuation of Sivers' long-standing

¹⁰⁶ Wittram, *Baltische Geschichte*, 190.

¹⁰⁷ For a still useful reconstruction of Schirren's main arguments, see Wittram, "Carl Schirrens 'Livländische Antwort'" (1869).

¹⁰⁸ Anon. [Berkholz], "Livländische Correspondenz", 481.

¹⁰⁹ Sivers, *Humanität und Nationalität*, xiv; cf. *ibid.*, 73–78 (n. 10).

engagement with Herder. An immediate incentive for its publication, according to Sivers himself, were the censorial constraints to which his collection *Herder in Riga* (1868) had been submitted before publication. In this collection, he had also intended to comment on the message of Herder for the contemporary situation, but the censor had crossed out this section next to some others.¹¹⁰ Hence, Sivers seized the opportunity of fully laying out this message as well as his views on the Baltic question in this pamphlet published abroad.

Sivers squarely positioned both Herder and himself in the league of “cosmopolitans”. Next to Herder, he quoted as his allies figures as various as Anacharsis Cloots, Ivan Turgenev, Immanuel Kant, Frederick of Prussia, and Mikhail Bakunin. For Sivers, the common element between all these thinkers was their unanimous rejection of the natural and physical (uncultivated) elements of nationality, which they demanded should be subordinated to the higher values of freedom (Cloots), civilization (Turgenev), peace (Kant), and humanity (Frederick the Great and Bakunin). At the same time, Sivers also immediately differentiated between the views of some of these authors. In particular, he juxtaposed the two different conceptions of humanity by Frederick of Prussia and Mikhail Bakunin. Although Frederick of Prussia had celebrated human sociability in the Ciceronian vein, he had also depicted the relationship between the state and the citizen in a monarchical-patriarchal way, presenting the monarchical principle as the heart and the enlivening principle of the whole of society. Thereby, Sivers argued, Frederick put the state before the people, overseeing the corruption of human sociability through the state. This mistake, he suggested, was avoided by Mikhail Bakunin who distinguished between “state patriotism” (*Staatspatriotismus*) and “popular patriotism” (*Volkspatriotismus*). As Bakunin had shown, it was impossible for the centralized states to be able to truly fraternalize, as the patriotism directed towards them required nothing but fame, dominion, and war. The only true fraternity could exist among confederated provinces, territories, and nations.¹¹¹

In this respect, Sivers suggested, the “republican Bakunin” was a true heir of Herder. Herder was exceptional in his ability to appreciate both the pluralism and diversity of different life forms, and yet to teach mankind that even in apparently opposed tendencies there was a “reconciling and liberating common element”, which gave no “reasonable ground for

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, viii–ix.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

mutual jealousy and fear”.¹¹² Herder’s humanism and cosmopolitanism, Siverts argued, were generated in the particular “political and social circumstances of our Baltic homeland” (*Heimath*), and indeed, made his philosophy particularly relevant in this context.¹¹³ Neglecting Herder’s critical assessment of Riga and the Baltic provinces in his *Journal*, Siverts dwelt on the possible positive aspects that Herder must have sympathized with there. Drawing on Herder’s own testimonies, as well as those of his biographer and friend Johann Georg Müller, Siverts suggested that what Herder must have esteemed most in this region was the “common spirit” of Riga, the spirit of self-government (Siverts systematically used the English term here), which he was eager to preserve and develop in Riga, and incite in all possible communities all over Russia and elsewhere.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, he must have sympathized with Baron Schoultz von Ascheraden’s personal example of abolishing serfdom in Livland, an attempt which paved the way for the subsequent liberations from 1804–1866, as well as with the proposal of the Livonian Diet to reopen the university.¹¹⁵ Yet, the failure of Catherine’s reforms must have also opened his eyes to the dangers of reform being initiated from above, without any consideration of, or understanding for, the special character of the cultivated Livonian region within the generally uncultivated Russia.¹¹⁶

One of Siverts’ overarching aims was to list Herder’s cosmopolitanism for the cause of the autonomy of the Baltic provinces. He presented two sets of arguments for this purpose. First, omitting any reference to Herder’s reform plans with regard to Riga, he emphasized the specific legal relationship of the provinces of Livland and Estland to the Russian Empire. He reiterated the Baltic argument that the capitulations and other contractual documents that Peter the Great and his generals had signed in 1710 were not revocable unilaterally, and praised the present monarch for his faithfulness and grace (*Treue und Gnade*) in this respect, despite the various provocations from Russian newspapers.¹¹⁷ Second, Siverts maintained that just like in Herder’s times, the Germans in Russia possessed the “right of the cultural leadership”.¹¹⁸ Although Russia could now boast a number of excellent literary works, it was completely unrealistic as well as unjusti-

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 2–3.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

fied to demand the abolition of German education. German culture and education, including university education, were on a much higher level than Russian ones.¹¹⁹

Quoting the last section of Herder's *Ideen* on the causes of the thriving culture in Europe and its supremacy among regions, Siverson elaborated on the contrast between Europe and Russia. In this section, Herder argued that Europe enjoyed a modest climate and natural resources, geography providing for intersection through various natural traffic ways, which enabled internal commerce as well as connected Europe to other parts of the world. Popish hierarchy had provided a necessary counterpoise to the despotism of princes, while this very despotism in turn precluded its development into a "Tibetan ecclesiastic state". In the long run, this fortunate balance of powers brought along "a third state", the one of "science, of useful activity, of emulative industry in the arts" and which alone could be the "life-blood of this great active body" (Europe).¹²⁰ Russia's situation and history were different because of its continental location and the immediate vicinity of Asia. It had a good chance, however, to improve its traffic connections through the railway system. As for the political situation, it was more difficult. Instead of an independent church, Peter I had invented Caesaropapism in Russia; the church had developed into a faithful servant of the state organism, without contributing anything to the education of the people. Even worse, Peter's rapid and multifarious reforms had brought numerous foreigners into the country. Not all of them were educated and skilled men; there were also many adventurers who did not deserve the privileges they received. Hence, a jealousy of all foreigners, and particularly of Germans, arose. When it was realized that it was impossible to simply expel the Germans, attempts were made to assimilate them.¹²¹ Yet assimilation through bribery (material rewards) completely corrupted the character of the person, just like forced assimilation (either through laws or through arms) could only generate "eternal hatred" and "insatiable revenge" against the oppressors. Poland's example amply revealed this. But finally, there was also no return to the pre-Petrine period, as it was impossible to undo the cultural influences that Russia had already received from Western Europe.¹²²

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 56–63.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26–27; cf. Herder, *Ideen*, 397–398.

¹²¹ Siverson, *Humanität und Nationalität*, 29–30.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 31.

What Herder had not known yet, Sivvers argued, was the idea of a principle of nationality (*Nationalitätsprinzip*). In its original form, Sivvers argued, this principle postulated the “political right of the speakers of the same language to unite themselves into a nation and to choose their form of government independently”.¹²³ It had emerged in the wake of the 1848 revolutions, informing the election of the French emperor (initially president, Louis Napoleon) and guiding the unification movements of Italians and Germans as well as the political struggle over Northern Schleswig. If consistently applied, it also promoted the “striving of the smaller peoples or fragments of peoples to preserve their language, mores, and laws so as to be able to unite themselves with the other peoples of the same language and nationality as soon as favourable circumstances emerged”.¹²⁴ Yet, the principle of nationality was a double-edged sword that was bound to “harm the one who grasped it in blind zeal”.¹²⁵ This was exactly what was happening in Russia. Russians were following the example of the German *Bund*, hoping to repeat German and Italian success in national unification. Yet, immediately the principle was also corrupted through two kinds of misinterpretations. First, nationality was confused with the “linguistic branch” (*Zweig*). The Moscovite *Slavenkongress* began to preach a peculiar solidarity between all Slavic peoples, forgetting that common descent was no proper reason for that. Indeed, even linguistically distant peoples (such as the Latvians) or peoples who shared mutual national hatred with Russians (such as the Poles) were included in the common Slavic family.

In reality, through such an idea one only sought to homogenize these peoples under the centralized government of the Russian *Double-Eagle*. Second, Slavic nationality was identified by the Russian language and Greek Orthodox confession. The task of homogenization was pursued with great dedication: instead of general humanistic education, “blood, race, and the nationality of the majority of the population” became synonymous with the “good of the peoples” (*Völkerwohl*). What was worse, even the liberal Russian press adopted this corrupt, widely denounced and “unfree principle of state” (*unfreie Staatsprinzip*), advocating the subordination of the German development of law and culture to general Russianism (*Gesamtrussenthum*).¹²⁶ This had also consequences for the indigenous peoples (Latvians and Estonians) in the Baltic provinces: they were prom-

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

ised “protection against the German oppressors who were sucking out their blood” as well as lured with various kinds of material benefits to adopt the Greek Orthodox confession.¹²⁷ In reality, the Russian journalists’ aim was to provoke hatred between different nationalities in the Baltic provinces.¹²⁸

Sivers’ response was to insist on the need to envision a new political program based on authentic Herderian ideas. Publishing Herder’s notes for his intended *Über die wahre Kultur Russlands*, Sivers attempted to reconstruct Herder’s possible guidelines for the formation (*Bildung*) of Russia. While maintaining that the general guidance of the monarch was needed for the formation of a nation, Herder had also warned against the possibility of deformation.¹²⁹ For Herder, the St. Petersburg Academy founded in 1724/25 by Peter the Great was a case in point. Instead of having “national spirit, it [...] did not live for, through, and in the nation, but served basely the court and slept”.¹³⁰ By the nineteenth century, Sivers argued, the damage was much more penetrating. Not everything, however, was lost yet. What was truly needed was independent human philosophy, development of language, morals, principles, religion, and reading to give “solidity” to the nation, just like Herder had insisted. Russia could still adopt a proper program of popular education (*Volksbildung*), the task of which could only be conducted by capable and competent (*fachmässig gebildete*) teachers in various communities and governments.¹³¹

The only true moral foundation of the Russian Empire could be the principle of *Humanität*. This principle incorporated everything that was truly important for mankind. Its deepest sense was the recognition and development of the common humanity underneath all differences. This recognition entailed also respect for nationality and the cultivation of nationality as a new “life-aspiring germ” (*lebensbürtige Keim*) in history.¹³² Through true “formation” and natural “emulation” between different individuals and peoples (including languages), the latter could bring their individual dispositions and character into the best possible form. In the competition between languages, those languages were victorious which contributed most to the arts and sciences, the general culture of mankind. Loyalty to

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 46–48.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 35, Herder, *Sammlung von Gedanken in Sämmtliche Werke*, IV, ed. by Suphan, 473–74.

¹³⁰ Sivers, *Humanität und Nationalität*, 35–36. Herder, *Sammlung von Gedanken in Sämmtliche Werke*, IV, ed. by Suphan, 473–74.

¹³¹ Sivers, *Humanität und Nationalität*, 64.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 41.

the principle of *Humanität* entailed that “our position in the state and to the state” (*unsere staatliche [...] Stellung und Hingehörigkeit*) was never to be confused with the national, cultural-educational position and belonging (*volksthümliche, bildungsgeschichtliche Stellung und Hingehörigkeit*).¹³³ Furthermore, one always had to remember that the “state was there only to serve humanity, not the other way around”.¹³⁴ Otherwise, the national principle was turned against nationalities, which was a “barbarism that we would neither wish to commit nor to endure ourselves”.¹³⁵ There was nothing dearer for a human being than his faith, mother tongue, and law (*Recht*), which all formed a “holy trinity” for him.¹³⁶ Siverson acknowledged that this applied also to the relationships of Baltic Germans to Estonians and Latvians. Using the term “Baltic” in an exceptionally wide sense, he argued that “we German Balts (*wir deutschen Baltiker*) must never turn the weapon of *Humanität* against our Estonian and Latvian compatriots (*Landsleute*), but must do our best to protect them just like ourselves against such attacks”.¹³⁷ *Humanität* was the only principle that truly fostered peace and friendship between different individuals and peoples, undermining the jealousy that one nation may have with regard to another.¹³⁸

For Siverson, *Humanität* also provided clear guidelines for organizing political institutions. Thanks to education, he argued, people would learn to participate in political work (*politische Arbeit*).¹³⁹ Although Siverson did not further develop this theme in his *Humanität und Nationalität*, he was in fact a staunch defender of the extension of rights of political participation to the Estonian and Latvian populations. In his *Appell an die europäische Öffentlichkeit*, he maintained that in modern times it was essential to reform historical institutions continuously, so that the “old, outdated forms would not hinder our own well-being” and progress.¹⁴⁰ In a modern state, additionally, there needed to be oppositional powers that would make different truths, social interests, and powers heard in the public arena. In this spirit, he announced that it was essential that Livland would not be hindered in exercising its legally-guaranteed “legislative initiative”, and that it

¹³³ Jegór von Siverson, *Humboldt und die deutsche Bildungsquelle in Livland. Rede zur Humboldtfeier gesprochen am 2/ 14 September 1869 zu Wolmar in Livland* (Leipzig, 1869), 9.

¹³⁴ Siverson, *Humanität und Nationalität*, 65.

¹³⁵ Siverson, *Humboldt und die deutsche Bildungsquelle*, 8.

¹³⁶ Siverson, *Humanität und Nationalität*, 57.

¹³⁷ Siverson, *Humboldt und die deutsche Bildungsquelle*, 8.

¹³⁸ Siverson, *Humanität und Nationalität*, 64.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Siverson, *Appell an die europäische Öffentlichkeit*, 21.

would proceed with the constitutional reforms transforming the existing *Virillandtag* into a *Repräsentativlandtag*, extending the rights of political participation to small land owners as well as burghers.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, he envisioned that this process was to take place with close cooperation between the three Baltic provinces, hence basically continuing to support the unification plans of 1862.

Drawing on the support of a small group of likeminded people, Sivers submitted a number of reform proposals to the Livonian Diet (in 1864, 1866, and 1869).¹⁴² He argued that the current level of *Bildung* of the Estonian and Latvian people required that they would participate in legislation through indirect representation.¹⁴³ This was the only way of “reconciling the estates and nationalities in Livland”, a step which was necessary for the general good and peace of the province (*Landeswohl*).¹⁴⁴ Only through such a reform was it possible to end the unfortunate situation in which one part of the population could be played out against the other by the imperial government.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, Sivers explicitly maintained that there were certain well-documented rights and historical customs and institutions that had to be abolished, as they had become harmful in the present. The barriers between estates were falling through benevolent education, and it was now necessary to make use of all powers and talents in society.¹⁴⁶

Like Herder, Sivers did not, however, specify the terms under which different nationalities would come to share the political space between them. While supporting the Estonians’ and Latvians’ legitimate claim to their own nationality as well as their political rights, he did not voice any

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19–20.

¹⁴² Jegór von Sivers, *Zur Revision der livländischen Verfassung. Zwei als Manuskript für Landtagsberechtigte gedruckte Anträge an die Landtage 1869 und 1866* (1869). According to Reinhard Wittram, Sivers belonged to a group of radicals associated with the academic Alexander von Middendorf, Wittram, *Meinungskämpfe im baltischen Deutschtum*, 38–41.

¹⁴³ In his reform proposal of 1866, Sivers envisioned four levels of representation: township assemblies (*Landgemeindeversammlungen*), small district (parish) assemblies (*Bezirksversammlungen*), district assemblies (*Kreistage*), and finally diet (*Landtag*), Sivers, “Antrag von 1866”, *Zur Revision der livländischen Verfassung*, 21–31. In 1869, after the introduction of the parish system in 1866, Sivers envisioned the deputies of the diet being elected within three electoral associations (*Wahlverbände*): those of small land owners, big land owners, and burghers, Sivers, “Antrag vom Jahre 1869”, *Zur Revision der livländischen Verfassung*, 10–12.

¹⁴⁴ Sivers, *Zur Revision der livländischen Verfassung*, 9. On Sivers’ reform proposals and other similar reform proposals in Livland in the 1860s, see Alexander von Tobien, *Die Livländische Ritterschaft in ihrem Verhältnis zum Zarismus und russischen Nationalismus*, 1 (Riga: Löffler, 1925), 388–389.

¹⁴⁵ Sivers, *Zur Revision der livländischen Verfassung*, 10.

¹⁴⁶ Sivers, “Antrag von 1866”, *Zur Revision der livländischen Verfassung*, 25.

particular sympathy with their attempts to cultivate their languages. True, he did not denounce this prospect as “dreamerish” and hopeless, as many other Baltic German authors, including Berkholz, had done, yet seemed to assume with the latter that educated Estonians and Latvians would swiftly adopt German as the language of literary and political communication. Hence, while supporting the development of a common political “Baltic nationality” based on a recognition of different ethnological nationalities, he underestimated the Estonians’ and Latvians’ quests for achieving a status of a “cultural nation” as well as their wish to conduct the public debates as well as political affairs in the vernacular.

Despite these arguably “unherderian” limitations of his argument, it is necessary to appreciate the overall Herderian pedigree of Siviers’ vision. While supporting the organic development of different parts of the empire, Siviers simultaneously advocated far-reaching reforms of historical institutions. Furthermore, while emphasizing the need to study, appreciate, and legally recognize the national diversity in the Russian empire, Siviers envisioned the reformed Baltic provinces becoming a model for the governing of different regions all over the Russian empire. Through education, all peoples would become capable of self-government and autonomous action (*Selbsttätigkeit*).¹⁴⁷ There was no need or justification for an artificial unification of a state, since it bred nothing but hatred between peoples. In a multinational empire in which the “autonomous constitutional differences coexisted under a harmonious equality of law”, different nations could exercise their rights of self-government, growing to recognize each other on the basis of their common humanity and hence achieving true fraternity.¹⁴⁸

Conclusions

Siviers’ appropriation of Herder’s ideas constitutes a significant contribution both to Baltic German political thought and the reception of Herder’s ideas in general. In contrast to Herder himself, Siviers had no worries about the future of modern civilized monarchies, or indeed, about the status of Germans among other European nations. By his time, Germans were self-evidently a cultural nation par excellence, and German political unification was well under way. Also, the worries about the shallow politeness of modern metropolitan culture had no resonance with Siviers who instead proudly celebrated the present cultural superiority of Germans to Russians.

¹⁴⁷ Siviers, *Nationalität und Humanität*, 55.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

Despite these differences of emphasis, Sivers provided an insightful reading of Herder's political philosophy. Combining Herder's ideas about the reform of Riga, Livland, and Russia, on the one hand, with his ideas about a purified cosmopolitan patriotism, on the other, Sivers showed that Herder's ideas rendered themselves to a rejection of the principle of nationality, if understood as a commitment to a nation state achieved through policies of national unification, while providing a theoretical underpinning for a federation of self-governing republican nations – an institutional solution that Herder himself did not explicitly spell out, but which can be seen as implicit in his philosophy of modern humane patriotism.

In the context of nineteenth-century debates on the principle of nationality, Sivers' pamphlet offers an interesting parallel to Lord Acton's famous essay "Nationality" published in *Home and Foreign Review* in 1862.¹⁴⁹ While Sivers, in the Herderian vein, appreciated national culture as a distinct object of cultivation and love, Acton emphasized its instrumental value for political liberty and the progress of civilization. The similarities between their understanding of the relationship of nation and state are nevertheless remarkable. Both Acton and Sivers valued self-government and autonomous action and believed that it was precisely the centralized state which corrupted nationality, while in a multinational federation, nations could flourish through enjoying regional autonomy as well as cultural exchange with each other. Both believed that the new principle of nationality was a dangerous weapon born from democratic revolutions, one that could easily be misappropriated by unitary, centralized states in order to tyrannize national minorities.¹⁵⁰ As such it bred barbarism, hostility, and war, while national identity (nationality) was both the bulwark of self-government as well as "the foremost limit to the excessive power of the state".¹⁵¹ Yet where Acton remained adamant about the need for the Catholic church and aristocratic corporations to serve as crucial intermediary powers, Sivers made calls for the democratization of historical political institutions. In this respect, next to their diverging views on the value of nationality in itself, there was a clear contrast between Acton's conservative Burkean pedigree¹⁵² and Sivers' republican Herderian one.

¹⁴⁹ Acton, "Nationality", *Home and Foreign Review*, 1 (July, 1862), 1–25.

¹⁵⁰ For an insightful reading of Acton's "Nationality" as an answer not only to Italian unification, but also to the nationalities problem in the Austrian Empire, see Timothy Lang, "Lord Acton and 'The insanity of nationality'", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 63:1 (January 2002), 129–149.

¹⁵¹ Acton, "Nationality", 9.

¹⁵² For Acton's intellectual affinity with Burke whom he considered "intellectually a "Catholic"" like himself, see Lang, "Lord Acton", 149.

The reception of Sivers' Herderian cosmopolitanism in the Baltic provinces remains yet to be studied. A number of representatives of the liberal reform party continued emphasizing reform as the necessary precondition of the preservation of both regional autonomy, as well as peace among the estates and nationalities in the provinces throughout the 1870s and early 1880s. Nevertheless, these ideas did not win any significant support among the Livonian nobility or the wider Baltic German population.¹⁵³ Indeed, he demanded giving up truly significant historical privileges of political representation, and this in a situation in which it was not entirely groundless to fear that each internal reform initiative would open the way for the central government to impose administrative and cultural Russification. Thus, even the prominent Baltic liberals and Sivers' fellow Herderians came to prefer the political philosophy of Carl Schirren's *Livländische Antwort* for tactical reasons, viewing its emphasis on the inviolability of historical law as the only trustworthy guide for successfully preserving the special position of the Baltic provinces in the Russian Empire. Nor was there, to my knowledge, any direct response to Sivers' ideas by Estonians or Latvians. Only Harry Jannsen (Johann Woldemar Jannsen's son and Lydia Koidula's brother) for a period defended a form of Baltic cosmopolitanism that showed close affinity with Sivers' Herderian cosmopolitanism.¹⁵⁴ Like Sivers among the Baltic Germans, Harry Jannsen was also alienated from mainstream Estonian politicians: Carl Robert Jakobson's vicious attacks against his ideas made him look almost like a national traitor. Indeed, Jannsen's *Baltia*, just like Sivers' humanitarian "Baltic self-government", seemed to neglect the massive disproportionality between the number of Baltic Germans *versus* the number of Estonians or Latvians in the Baltic provinces,¹⁵⁵ as well as underestimated the Estonians' and Latvians' quest for cultural and political life in the vernacular.

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¹⁵³ See Tobien, *Die Ritterschaftliche Reformpolitik*, 392–409; Wittram, *Meinungskämpfe im baltischen Deutschtum*, 41–61 and 78–134.

¹⁵⁴ For Harry Jannsen, see Ea Jansen, "Baltlus", *baltisakslased, eestlased*", I, *Tuna*, 2 (2005), 35–44; II, *Tuna*, 3 (2005), 31–42 (32–42).

¹⁵⁵ The Estonian and Latvian peasants formed more than 99 per cent of the rural population, Gert von Pistohlkors, "The inversion of ethnic group status", 170.

KOKKUVÕTE: *Humanism versus natsionalism Vene impeeriumi moraalse alusena: Jegór von Siversi herderlik kosmopolitism*

Artikkel vaatleb üht eripärast näidet Johann Gottfried Herderi poliitilise filosoofia retseptisioonist – Liivimaa autori ja aadlimehe Jegór von Siversi (1823–79) käsitlust Läänemereprovintside staatusest Vene impeeriumis. Herderi poliitilisele filosoofiale toetudes kritiseeris Sivers 1860. aastate Vene publitsistide moonutatud arusaama “rahvusprintsibist”. Tema nägemuses oli riigi ainus mõeldav moraalne alus herderlik kosmopolitism, mis väärtustab kõikvõimalikke inimlikke erinevusi, sh uut tõusvat rahvuslust, ent näeb inimsust (*Humanität*) sügavama ning ühtlasi ülimusliku printsibina. Siversi Herderi-tõlgendus on tähelepanuväärne nii Herderi retseptisiooniloo kui ka Eesti mõtteloo kontekstis. Vaadeldes Herderi varaseid ideid Riia, Liivimaa ning Venemaa poliitilistest reformidest seostatuna tema hilisema humanistliku ning kosmopoliitse patriotismi teooriaga, rõhutab Sivers, et Herderi poliitiline visioon on vastandlik tugeva suveräänse rahvusriigi ideele ning soosib pigem paljurahvuselise, paljudest autonoomsetest ning vabariiklikult valitsetud regioonidest koosneva föderatiivse riigi mudelit. Oma ajastu kontekstis pakkus Sivers Herderist inspireerituna välja, et Venemaa võiks samuti jaguneda kultuuriliselt ning õiguslikult eristuvateks piirkondadeks, mis oleksid rahvahariduse arendamise abil võimalised jõudma laiaulatusliku vabariikliku omavalitsuseni. Balti provintsid olid tema jaoks selles suhtes võimalikuks teenäitajaks. Tõenäoliselt oli Siversil siin omakorda mõttes eeskujuks autonoomne Soome hertsogiriik, viimast küll mainimata, osutas ta oma toetust sellele, kuulutades avalikult, et Woldemar von Bock – tuntud Soome eeskuju toetaja ning “Ühendatud Balti provintside” idee autor – on tema “sõber tões” ja “tõelises patriotismis”. Liivimaa sisepoliitika kontekstis esitas Sivers Liivimaa maapäevale korduvalt ettepanekuid viimase reformimiseks “representatiivkoguks”, kus saaksid kaudse esindatuse kõik kohalikud seisused ning rahvused; selleks ei olnud viimastel mitte ainult õigus, vaid see oli ka vajalik, et tagada rahu ning üksmeel regioonis. Kuidas taoline poliitiline koostöö erinevate rahvuste vahel reaalselt pidi teostuma, selles osas ei olnud Siversil siiski palju öelda ning tema nägemuses jäi sakslastele nende kõrgema haridus- ja kultuuritaseme tõttu selgelt juhiroll.