The Classics against the Enlightenment in the 18th century

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

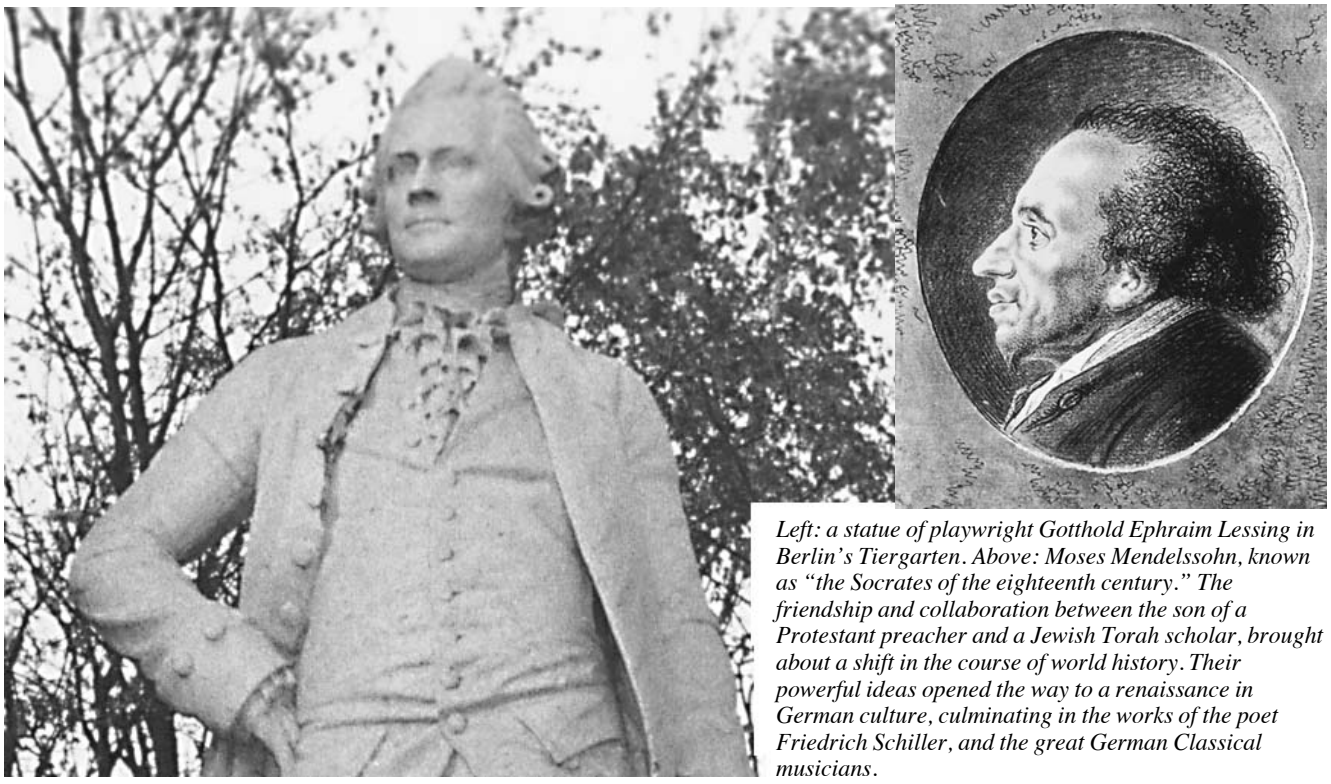
Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche gave the following speech on July 25 at the summer academy of the Schiller Institute in Oberwesel, Germany. It has been translated from the German by George Gregory.

The two people who played a decisive role in the emergence of the German Classics, because they first laid the foundation for the development of the Classics, are, without a doubt, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn.

With my presentation, I want to encourage you to read and engage yourself with these two authors when you go home. I promise you, it will be an enjoyable experience. For when you read them, you will feel immediately at home in a humanist world. You will be painfully reminded of the fact that we move at a far lower cultural level, in comparison to these two people, who did, after all, live 250 years ago. In comparison to these two people, we are already in a new Dark Age, and the culture around us is replete with barbarism.

It may surprise you to hear that, for who today still knows Lessing? Who speaks about Moses Mendelssohn? Mendelssohn has been almost completely forgotten. If we consider the research on Mendelssohn today, we can observe that it is presented in a distorted way. Orthodox Judaism rejects Mendelssohn, because he supposedly watered down Judaism by favoring Jewish assimilation. The philosophers look down on him as a "popular" philosopher. Yet, it is most questionable, whether there could have been a German Classic period without Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn, in that form in which it did indeed take shape.

The work of these two extraordinary men needs emphasizing all the more, because they began their struggle as young and impecunious people, only inspired by ideas, at a time when the oligarchy had already by and large suppressed the influence of Leibniz. Call to mind once more, that Leibniz's ideas and political activity were the ultimate threat to the oligarchy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They knew precisely what it would mean for them if Leibniz's ideas and



Left: a statue of playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in Berlin's Tiergarten. Above: Moses Mendelssohn, known as "the Socrates of the eighteenth century." The friendship and collaboration between the son of a Protestant preacher and a Jewish Torah scholar, brought about a shift in the course of world history. Their powerful ideas opened the way to a renaissance in German culture, culminating in the works of the poet Friedrich Schiller, and the great German Classical musicians.

his metaphysical conception of the universe, and the theory of the state which he developed out of it, were implemented—with his absolutely optimistic image of the human being, the idea of physical economy as the source of wealth in society. He is the creator of this tradition, and all of his diplomatic initiatives—including the Eurasian land-bridge, the integration of Eurasia by means of infrastructure—which induced the oligarchy to combat his ideas and (similar to today) to undermine his influence with the mercenary scientists they bought.

One important example is the salon of Antonio Conti, who attempted to use Newton on the continent against Leibniz. That, naturally, went hand in hand with Newton's own theory of the state, with Jeremy Bentham and his hedonistic calculus, i.e., an absolutely degraded image of man, as a creature who is evil by nature, where each person is the "wolf" of the other, and is only driven by the desire to maximize the pleasure of the moment, and to minimize pain.

A large part of the population today lives according to these ideas of Hobbes, Locke, or Mandeville: maximum pleasure in the here and now, and avoidance of everything which is unpleasant. This attitude, which determines how people think today, traces back to the evil oligarchical philosophers (or, better, ideologues) in the eighteenth century.

Antonio Conti was a Venetian nobleman, who first of all organized a network around Nicole Malebranche, and then systematically organized the exchange of scientists between the Académie Française in France and the British Royal Society, in order to build up a network of scientists who taught these philosophical views. He went at his work in a way which is quite similar to how George Soros works today, in Russia and East Europe. What is at stake is not science, but the control of how people think.

A second phase in this struggle was Voltaire, one of the most degenerate people imaginable. He loved lies and deception, luxury, and he was a gambler. He organized the Anglophiles on the continent, and was ultimately called to Berlin, to the court of Frederick the Great, where he made it his vocation to extinguish all of Leibniz's influence at the Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin, which Leibniz himself had founded in 1701 under Frederick I. Together with people such as Euler and Maupertuis, systematic attacks on the most important ideas of Leibniz were organized. For example, in 1747, in a competition at the Academy, the question was posted in which the sole issue was to refute Leibniz's *Monadology:* Prizes were awarded to those people who assembled the worst slanders. Berlin teemed with the degenerate followers of this sort of "Enlightenment."

That was the climate in which the friendship and collaboration between the son of a Protestant preacher and a Jewish Torah scholar, brought about a shift. They opened the way to the high point of the history of German culture, and their ideas soon prevailed in Germany.

Moses Mendelssohn was celebrated as the "Socrates of the eighteenth century," and Lessing revived the world of ancient Greece, inventing modern comedy and tragedy. To-

gether with Moses Mendelssohn, he developed a new aesthetics, which became the basis for Friedrich Schiller's aesthetic writings. At the same time, Mendelssohn wrote important essays on the state, religion, and natural law.

Who were these two extraordinary young men?

The Socrates of the eighteenth century

Moses Mendelssohn was born in 1728 in the ghetto of Dessau, 80 kilometers from Berlin. He was the son of Mendel Dessau, who ran a small Hebrew school. Already as a young man, Moses did not want to simply interpret the liturgical texts in the Hebrew language, which was how children usually learned Hebrew, but he made it a point to learn Hebrew through learning the grammar, and so he also learned grammar. He had the good fortune of reading *The Guide for the Perplexed,* by Rabbi Moses Maimonides. In this book, he read about the tradition of Judaism, in which there is no contradiction between faith and reason. He then followed his teacher, Rabbi Frenkel, to Berlin, 80 kilometers on foot.

I emphasize this, because the contrast to the "why not?" generation of today is so great: The Baby Boomers were followed by "Generation X," and then came "Generation Y," and finally "Generation Why Not?" I mean the nest-sitters who live at home up to their 35th birthday, because Mommy does their laundry.

So, Moses was 15 years old, and you have to imagine that the situation for Jews in the eighteenth century in Germany and other European countries was absolutely degrading. Indeed, in 1648, the Peace of Westphalia had formulated the principle of tolerance for Catholics, Lutherans, and Reform Christians, but not for Jews. Jews were tolerated as money-dealers, but only a small layer was accepted in this function; the others had no other rights to the protection of the state, no right of residence. Under Frederick II, the policy was unfortunately rottenly anti-Jewish. Jews had to identify themselves with a yellow arm-band. It was only under the progressive Austrian Emperor, Joseph II, that this identification was revoked in 1781, with the so-called Tolerance Edict, and Jews were given the freedom to run businesses. Nevertheless, those Jews who converted to Christianity were given preferential treatment. Under the rule of Frederick II, only 152 Jewish families were permitted to live in Berlin. Jews were divided into six groups, and only a small group had any freedom of movement and the freedom to run businesses. A third group, the so-called "extraordinary-protection Jews," were permitted to extend the protection to only one member of the family, either the wife or one child. Mendelssohn belonged to this third group, and he was still a member of that group after having lived in Berlin for 20 years, and after having become a renowned and respected writer and a sage.

This repression led to the self-isolation of the Jews, and that was an obstacle for their development for a long time. Self-administration was carried out by Orthodox rabbis, who insisted on the strict observance of the written and unwritten laws. It was only permitted to speak Yiddish, a mixture of Hebrew and Middle High German, and the education of children consisted almost exclusively of interpretation of the Talmud. It was considered to be in bad taste to read books in the German language, and since many rabbis came from the East Prussian territories, they had had little access to West European culture. Whoever dared at that time to speak better German than Polish Jews, was thought to be a heretic. The children were punished and the parents persecuted. This self-isolation naturally prevented any access to cultural life.

This must be kept in mind, in order to appreciate the extraordinary achievement of Moses Mendelssohn in freeing himself from this ghettoization, backwardness, and social repression. How did he do that? He went to Berlin, and there he studied the history of Protestantism, German, Latin, English, French, mathematics with the mathematician Israel Samoscz, Locke, and Leibniz. From 1750 on, when he obtained a small job from a Jewish silk-trader, Isaac Bernhard, he had some money and spent it to study music, and for tickets to concerts and theater performances. Then he changed his name from Moses Dessau to Moses Mendelssohn, son of Mendel.

Then, he met another 25-year-old, namely Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Who was this Lessing?

Lessing's youth

The father, Johann Gottfried Lessing, was a Protestant pastor, who married the daughter of his predecessor. Together they had ten sons and one daughter. Gotthold was the second son. They lived in meager circumstances, were often hungry, and never had enough money. Money, by the way, was never a standard for Lessing. He would never have done anything against his inner inclinations only to obtain money. He learned very early how to develop creative stress. The experience which shaped him decisively in that respect was at a princes' school, the Afraneum, which he attended for five years. His interest in Classical antiquity was awakened already there. He studied Greek (Isocrates, Sophocles), and also Hebrew three hours each week.

Lessing was by no means a dry person; he was jovial and had a sense of humor. He noticed early on that his sister was very dependent on money. He wrote to her on Dec. 30, 1743:

"I wish that all your Mammon were stolen. That would probably do you more good than if someone were to feed your money-bag with some 100 pieces of ducats.—Your loving brother."

At that time—he was 14 years old—he began to translate Euclid, three books of which are preserved in his collected writings. He read Homer, Anacreon, songs about wine and love, and Theophrastus' character-description, comedies by Plautus and Terence. He described ancient comedies as "my world." He tried his hand at the art in a first comedy, *The Young Scholar*.

The school, which resembled a monastery, bored him, and so, under-challenged, he asked his father for a change.

That happened after a while, and the rector wrote to his father: "He is a horse that has to be given double feed. The lessons which are difficult for others, are as easy as child's play for him. We can hardly hold him back."

So, he succeeded to get a change in his situation. He gave a speech when he left, on the mathematics of the non-Classical peoples, the *mathematica barbarorum*. He had collected fragments for a history of ancient mathematics.

When he was 17, he went to the university in Leipzig, attended lectures on literature, the Greek poets, Roman antiquities, and general history. He heard lectures by Gottsched, the pope of literature of that time, on poetics, and was completely disgusted: Gottsched was too pedantic for him. Instead of continuing to attend boring lectures, he turned—as all good humanists did—to study the original sources. Then he suddenly noticed that his body was completely stiff and peasant-like; so, he learned to dance, to fence, and to vault. After that, his fellow students admired his noble posture.

He became acquainted with Fredericke Caroline Neuber, who led a good theater group in Leipzig. He came into contact with a student, Mylius, who had written two plays for Neuber. Lessing was gripped by a love of the theater and spent all his money on theater. He did translations in exchange for a free seat in the theater. Finally, when he was 18, he had the crucial idea to finish writing his first comedy. Neuber was enthusiastic about the piece and said, rightly: This is the harbinger of a new epoch of German national drama.

What was the subject of this comedy? Some of you may know it from your school days, and maybe you played in it yourselves. The main character is a young scholar, Damis, who is a vain word-juggler and a fool. He writes an essay on the monads in answer to one of the contest questions put forward at the Academy in Berlin, which was the campaign of the Academy against Leibniz. (There are parallels to the situation today, showing how such an institution is controlled.) He sends his essay via a friend to the judge, and impatiently waits in expectation that his essay will be crowned with the prize. Suddenly, his friend gives him the news, that he did not send the essay in at all, because he misunderstood the topic; i.e., instead of discussing a philosophical issue, he had only picked it apart philologically. Lessing sets up a counter-character to Damis, Valer, who studies people and the world in order to be useful to the state. Lessing's comedy was an immediate success.

But then, the following happened. A merchant passed gossip on to Lessing's father, that his son was leading a completely free life and was running around in the company of play actors. The crowning climax was Christmas 1747, when Lessing's mother sent him a loaf of Christmas bread and received the news, that Lessing had not only become a comedy writer, but that he had even shared the Christmas bread with the comedy players! That made his mother cry bitterly. . . . So there was a big crisis. His father sent a telegram: You have to come home immediately, your mother is on her death-bed. The winter was severe in Leipzig at the time, and Lessing reached home in a post-carriage, half-frozen. His parents were happy that he had arrived alive and healthy, and that an even more severe scolding was averted.

It was a problem for Lessing throughout his life, that his family did not understand him. His sister found poems about wine and love on his desk and threw them into the fire immediately. Lessing responded by throwing snow down the front of her blouse. Ultimately, he decided to study medicine, but instead of attending classes, he went to theater rehearsals in the morning and the performances in the evening. His friend Mylius, who had a bad reputation, had nevertheless received a favorable judgment from the Academy for a scientific paper he had written for a competition, and was called to Berlin, where on July 25, 1748 he observed the annular solar eclipse.

Unfortunately, Lessing had signed loan guarantees for some of the debts of actors, who left him hanging, and he had to flee to Wittenberg because he could not pay the debts. In Wittenberg, he studied ancient philosophy and then returned to Berlin, where new slanders against him were passed on to his father.

On Jan. 20, 1749, he wrote a moving letter to his mother, where he says, among other things: "I have come to understand that books would make me learned, but they would never make me into a human being. . . . I will not return home. I will also not go to universities any more."

I say this because, to become a genius, it is sometimes necessary to do unconventional things. The problem was that Lessing's father had become suspicious of him because of the thoughtless slanders. Lessing was saddened, for his whole life, that his father believed the slanders more than he did his son. He even wrote to him, "that you are accustomed to think the lowest, most shameful, most Godless of me, persuade yourself and let yourself be persuaded. . . . Time will tell who is right."

Problems in Berlin

Lessing wrote "Der Freigeist" ["The Free Spirit"] and "Die Juden" ["The Jews"] and became acquainted with the 38-year-old professor Samuel König, a Swiss mathematician. Some of you know him from the famous conflict that he had with Maupertuis and Voltaire. König had written an essay on Leibniz's principle of least action, where he proved that this law was discovered by Leibniz. Maupertuis, who had become president of the Academy of Sciences in the meantime, had written also about this principle, in a banalized form—to the effect that God works with austerity mechanisms and austerity policy, and uses only the least possible energy in the universe. Naturally, that was *not* Leibniz's conception. Out of fairness, König forwarded his own paper to Maupertuis before it was published, but the latter was too arrogant to read it. When the paper was then published in the *Leipzig Acta,* and König proved in it that Leibniz's principle of least action is sometimes characterized by a minimum, but also sometimes

by a maximum, Maupertuis went wild, because he had been unmasked as a plagiarist. He had taken so much trouble to prove that Leibniz had plagiarized from Newton, and now he himself stood unmasked, plagiarizing from Leibniz. The honor of the Academy was at stake.

König, to prove his case, was supposed to obtain the original of Leibniz's own discussion, but that original had been in the possession of his friend Henzi, a friend who had been condemned to death by the Swiss authorities in the meantime, and the Leibniz letter was now in the hands of the Swiss authorities. Leonhard Euler intervened; Voltaire accused Maupertuis of abusing his office; and so forth.

Lessing knew of all these intrigues and he knew the character of these people. Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn knew that the proponents of the Enlightenment were charlatans. Maupertuis, for example, announced a grotesque "scientific project," to show that people should be treated with opium in order to enable them to see the future. Or, to prevent sickness, the body was to be smeared with a thick paste to prevent the disease from penetrating the body. Or, vivisection should be carried out on living criminals, to see how the brain functions.

A short while later, Lessing was involved in a bitter conflict with Voltaire. He became acquainted with Voltaire's private secretary, Richier de Louvain. A typical scandal: Lessing had borrowed from the private secretary a copy of the first volume of Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XIV* [*The Age of Louis XIV*]. Twenty-four of the best printed copies were supposed to be sent to the royal family, and Lessing had put together a copy from an inferior printing, with the promise that he would show it to no one. An unfortunate chain of events led to the book's turning up at the home of Count Schulenburg, where it was seen, and a girlfriend of Voltaire's reported it to him immediately. Voltaire flew into a rage, fired his secretary, and was now suspicious that Lessing would publish this book.

Lessing and Mendelssohn had very direct knowledge of the character of these people, also at the personal level. Voltaire wrote a letter to Lessing, which Lessing said was silly. The rumor-kitchen worked overtime against Lessing, and slanders spread. To Lessing, it had been clear already one year earlier, what Voltaire's problem was. Voltaire had commissioned a Jewish banker, Hirsch, to buy up a large sum of Saxonian tax-bills, which had dropped in value in Saxony, but for which Prussian subjects had to pay the full value, according to an order issued by Frederick II. Voltaire went to this financier, Hirsch, and said, Frederick allows me to have you speculate for me. Then came another Jewish money-dealer, Ephraim, and he offered to do the job more cheaply. Hirsch sued Voltaire for damages and Voltaire had an arrest warrant issued against Hirsch, whose father had a heart-attack as a result, and Voltaire finally forged signatures and also committed perjury in writing. The private secretary Richier, who was still working for Voltaire at the time, hired Lessing as a translator for this legal business, and so Lessing had dinner with Voltaire almost daily, so he had the most direct view of Voltaire's character.

In April 1752, Lessing received a degree as Master of Free Arts, and returned to Berlin, where, at the age of 25, he became acquainted with Moses Mendelssohn. A circle of friends developed around Lessing, Mendelssohn, Ewald Christian von Kleist, Gleim, Ramler, and Christoph Friedrich Nikolai. The relationship between Lessing and Mendelssohn, especially, soon became a lively friendship. Moses visited Lessing every morning from 7 to 9 for discussions, before turning to business matters.

Lessing wrote to Michaelis about his friend in October 1754:

"I foresee him as an honor to his nation if he can mature, in contrast to his own brethren in faith, who have been driven by the unfortunate spirit of persecution against people of his like. His honesty and his philosophical spirit allow me to see in him, in advance, a second Spinoza, who would lack nothing to be fully like the first—except his mistakes."

That point becomes important in the later debate with Jacobi, since it shows that Lessing did not think very highly of Spinoza. Lessing and Mendelssohn wrote a joint work, "Pope: A Metaphysician." Once again, this was in a competition, this time at the English Academy, on Alexander Pope, the English poet, who claimed that everything is right that exists. That should be contrasted to the Leibnizian idea of the best of all possible worlds. Naturally, in 1755 the Academy awarded prizes to work that denigrated Leibniz. Lessing and Mendelssohn published their work anonymously, and only Lessing was recognized as the author. That, in turn, drew the venom of the French academicians.

Studies in the effect of art

In Potsdam in 1755, Lessing wrote *Miss Sarah Sampson,* and with this piece, he thought he had founded a new form of tragedy, on the Greek model. Lessing wanted to reshape the old into something new, and to find new forms for the present times. Indeed, with this piece he laid the foundation for realistic popular tragedy.

It was in this period that the famous dialogue developed among Lessing, Mendelssohn, and Nikolai, a theory of *Trauerspiel,* or tragedy. Mendelssohn wrote letters about "Die Empfindungen" ["The Emotions"], his second work. Lessing wrote "Über den jetzigen Zustand der schönen Wissenschaften in Deutchland" ["On the Current State of the Beautiful Sciences in Germany"]. Winkelmann wrote "Die Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in Malerei und Bildhauerei" ["Thoughts About the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture"]. It was clear for Lessing and Mendelssohn that they were orienting toward Leibniz. In his work on emotions, Mendelssohn wrote:

"The immortal Leibniz! I erect an eternal monument in my heart. Without your help, I would be lost forever. I never knew you yourself; but your imperishable writings, which remain unread by the great men of the world, and to which I

appeal for help in solitary hours, have guided me on a sure route to high, true, world wisdom, to knowledge of myself, and of my origin. They have buried the sacred truths in my soul, upon which my happiness is founded; they have educated me."

"On the Emotions" was a letter-dialogue between Theocles, a thoughtful and judicious youth, and Euphranor, who is enthusiastic and dreamy. Theocles sees a purposeful world perfection as the source of the pleasant emotions, i.e., he argues his theory from the standpoint of Leibniz's "pre-established harmony," that the heavenly pleasures come from the fact that the human being takes joy in the perfection of the world, according to a plan of God. Euphranor, however, proceeds from the subjective side, and says that the experience of the beautiful occurs through the emotions. And he argues from the standpoint of the monad which, according to Leibniz, has the characteristic of joyous imaginative activity. Mendelssohn distinguishes now between two powers of the soul—a higher, Reason, Understanding; and a lower one, confused, or based upon emotion. He asks, how do these two powers of the soul relate to each other, if Reason and the heart are not in agreement?

(Recall Jeremy Bentham and the "hedonistic calculus." Since Thomas Hobbes, the human being has been called "the wolf of humans." This person only has emotions based on "*Lust*." He wants pleasure or does not want pain, and seeks to avoid what is unpleasant.)

I have come to the conclusion that the entire development of aesthetics in the German Classics—beginning with Mendelssohn, Nikolai, and Lessing, and continued by Schiller—is basically a direct attack on the hedonistic calculus of Bentham, and they were thinking about how it were possible, not only at the level of Reason and Understanding, but also in emotions, to develop a different concept, i.e., to develop a differentiated conceptualization about the emotions.

Moses Mendelssohn wrote: "Beauty is based on unity in multiplicity." It consists in the unclear representation of perfection and this corresponds, in turn, to the pleasant emotions. But, in comparison with the higher capacities of the soul, they have to be seen as lacking something. So, he draws a dividing line line between the sensuous pleasures and the pleasures of the soul. Sensuous pleasure is, he says, an unclear but lively representation of the soul, brought about by the perfection of the body. The pleasures of the soul, on the other hand, come from the perfection of the viewed object. Mendelssohn calls the first, the sensuous pleasures, pleasant emotions, and the second, the pleasures of the soul, "*Lust,*" or desire.

Schiller, in the 24th letter of his aesthetical writings, used the term "*Lust*" as "*freie Lust,*" or free desire, "the disinterested" pleasure of the aesthetic perception of the beautiful. Mendelssohn uses yet another notion of beauty in the letters, which, despite the differentiation, is subordinate as intelligible perfection.

After having worked on the theories of Louis Jean Levesque de Pouilly, he came to a revision of his standpoint, and wrote later, in "Rhapsodie":

"The pleasant emotion in the soul is nothing else than the clear, but indistinct vision of perfection, and insofar as it is accompanied by a sensuous desire, by a comfort of the body or a harmonic tension of the nerve fibers, the soul also enjoys a sensuous, but indistinct vision of the perfection of its body."

And, finally, in the 11th letter, Mendelssohn says:

"We have come so far, that we have discovered a threefold source of pleasure and we have distinguished its confused boundaries: the unity in multiplicity or beauty, the agreement of the multiplicity or the intelligible perfection, and finally, the improved condition of our bodily constitution or sensuous desire. All fine arts take delight from this sacred source, with which we refresh the soul thirsting for pleasure."

Mendelssohn is attempting here to develop an objective concept of beauty, and he defines beauty as "sensuous perfection." That is extremely important, because Immanuel Kant wrote immediately, in the *Critique of Judgment,* that there is no generally valid concept of beauty, but rather that beauty, as distinct from Reason, is individual, something completely arbitrary. What pleases one person, will not be pleasing to someone else. There is no way to objectively reach a lawfulness of beauty. And with that, Kant naturally threw the basic conceptions of the Classics out the window, i.e., that beauty is subject to an intelligible and emotionally recognizable lawfulness.

What is at issue for Mendelssohn, is primarily to improve the emotions. The issue is not the human being who, as a "wolf," only feels pleasure or pain; the issue is to ennoble the emotions. One way to do that is to excite "painfully pleasant mixed emotions." For example, compassion, and that is of immense importance today. We have all experienced it a hundred times; we have said, Africa is dying, look at what is happening in Indonesia; and yet there are people who say, that doesn't interest me at all! This lack of compassion is what constitutes the character of a dying society. The great minds of the Classics, such as Mendelssohn and Lessing, tried to improve people in their own time. Schiller said later, that every improvement is only possible through an improvement of the capacity for emotion. I am absolutely convinced of that.

Mendelssohn says: In compassion lies the essential effect of tragedy. What is known under the name of horror in tragedy, is nothing but a compassion which surprises us. For the danger never threatens ourselves, but our fellow man, for whom we are sad. This same thought is articulated by Lessing in a letter to Nikolai in November 1756, where he writes:

"Horror in tragedy is nothing but the sudden surprise of compassion.

"So, if it is true that the entire art of the tragic poet is based on the sure excitement and duration of a single feeling of compassion, then I say that the characteristic of tragedy is this: It should expand our capacity to feel compassion.

"It should not only teach us to feel compassion against

this or that misfortune; rather, it should make us capable of that feeling to such an extent that the unfortunate should move us and grip us at all times, and under all circumstances. And now I refer to the idea which Herr Moses may preliminarily demonstrate, if you, despite your own feeling, should wish to doubt this.

"The most compassionate person is the best person, he who most inclines to all social virtues, to all kinds of magnanimity. He who makes us compassionate, makes us better and more virtuous, and the tragedy that does that, also does this, or—it does the one to do the other.

"I proceed the same way with comedy. It should enable us to be capable of recognizing all forms of the ridiculous. He who has this capacity will seek to avoid all kinds of what is ridiculous in his behavior, and thus become the best educated and most moral person."

Schiller takes up the same issue of the relationship between pain and pleasure in his writings on "Der Grund des Vergnügens an tragischen Gegenständen" ["On the Reasons Why We Take Pleasure in Tragic Subjects"], "Über Naive und Sentimentalische Dichtung" ["On Naive and Sentimental Poetry"], and "Über das Erhabene" ["On the Sublime"], in a direct continuation of Mendelssohn. In his work on the foundations of the fine arts and science, Mendelssohn writes:

"In the rules of beauty, which the genius of the artist senses, and which the art critic resolves into conclusions of Reason, lie buried the deepest secrets of our soul, every rule of beauty is at once a discovery in the theory of the soul, because it contains a prescription for the conditions under which a beautiful object can have the best effect upon our heart, so that it must be possible to found it in the nature of the human spirit and to be explained from its characteristics."

That is the reason why Lyn [Lyndon LaRouche] always says that preoccupation with great art trains the faculty of our own soul, which is the source of creativity. That is why the study of beauty in art is a way to study the laws of the soul. That naturally requires an agreement of the macro- and the microcosm with the conception of the human being as a monad. And that is also what Schiller later says, that theater addresses the finest movements of the soul and ennobles them.

Rules, says Mendelssohn, are preparations. In performance, of course, one must beware of demanding that these rules be too strict. In his work "Von der Herrschaft über Neigungen und die Meinungen" ["On Mastery over Inclinations and Opinions"], he speaks of the astonishing effect of habit on our soul. And since what is at stake is the humanization of our emotions, Moses says that this capacity of the soul will, through practice, which has the same effect as habit, become objective. I think that is a brilliant thought.

The question is now, how can you, a creature of habit, with bad habits, develop your real self? For example, when you go home at night, rather than turning on the TV and drinking a beer, you will start studying Leibniz or Mendelssohn, and that becomes a habit which does not loosen its grip. Moses says, since practice has the same effect as habit, we only need to replace the habit with the practice. Then, you have discovered the key to genius! I.e., you only need to practice and practice. Schiller says it also: Genius is work. Lyn emphasizes the same point.

Moses, in his work on the sublime and the naive in the fine sciences, generated a new definition, which had a direct effect on Schiller. He separates the idea of the sublime from that of perfection, and says:

"What is great, grips our attention, and since it is the magnitude of a perfection, the soul holds fast with pleasure to such an object, and all incidental notions in it [the object] become shadowy, the immeasurability excites a sweet shudder which flows through us entirely, and the multiplicity thwarts all satiation and inspires the power of imagination to thrust further and further. All of these emotions blend in the soul, flowing into each other, and become a single phenomenon, which we call wonder."

Looking at the sublime is also a way to exercise the emotions, because it tears people out of the everyday world and brings them to admiration, in this way. In his work on grace and beauty in movement, Moses writes that grace is connected to the naive, because "the movements of excitation naturally and easily flow toward each other softly, and without deliberation and consciousness announce that the well-springs of the soul, the movements of the heart, from which these voluntary movements flow, also play without compulsion, softly accord with each other, and also develop artlessly. That is why the idea of innocence and moral simplicity is always connected with high grace."

The Laocoön sculpture

Mendelssohn first shaped the notions of the sublime, the naive, and grace, which Classical aesthetics, especially Schiller, then developed. The writings of Mendelssohn also had a direct impact on Lessing. We must imagine the friendship between the two as a give-and-take, connected to work on these issues. Nikolai, for example, reports that the first seed for the work on the Laocoön sculpture, was in a letter by Mendelssohn and Lessing's reply to this letter. In December 1756, Mendelssohn wrote to Lessing:

"I will go with you into the school of the ancient poets, but when we leave it, you come with me into the school of the ancient sculptors. I have not seen their works of art, but Winkelmann (in the essay on the imitation of the works of the Greeks), whom I trust to have a fine sense of taste, says: Their sculptors never let their gods and heroes be seduced by an unbridled passion. Among them one always finds nature at best (as he calls it), and the passions accompanied by a certain calmness of the heart, so that the painful emotion of compassion is at once veiled over with a gossamer of wonder and esteem."

At that time, it was common knowledge, but today no one knows about it: Laocoön was the Trojan priest of Apollo in Greek mythology, who warned the Trojans not to let in the wooden horse which the Greeks had left behind when they

feigned their retreat, because he suspected a trick. Shortly thereafter, Laocoön and his two sons were strangled by two snakes during a sacrificial ritual. This was understood to be a sign of the imminent demise of Troy. The marble group of the sculptors Agesandros, Polydorros, and Athenadoros from Rhodes, represents this myth. In 1506, this marble group was rediscovered in Nero's golden house, and it is now in the Vatican. It is the sculptural work of art which had the most impact on the German Classics.

Lessing objected to Winkelmann's description of the work in one respect. The creators of this group show Laocoön in a dire situation, but the scene is given a measured expression nevertheless. Winkelmann attributed this to the Greek ideal of measure, which saw the unbridled expression of the pain of a man to be unworthy of the man. Lessing thought, on the other hand, that aesthetic reasons were decisive, so that it was not considerations of decency that prevailed, but rather the visual and emotional impact. An important difference. The aim of optical vision is distinctness; the aim of aesthetic vision is the movement of an excitation of the heart. That would only be possible if the viewer were left an inner freedom.

Recall Schiller's "Über Bürgers Gedichte" ["On Bürger's Poems"]. Bürger says, "I must cry out my agony," and Schiller says that that has nothing to do with good poetry. That is how Lessing argues also, and he describes how the poet Virgil described Laocoön poetically, expressing the agony with powerful exuberance. The sculptors, by contrast, allow him to vanquish the agony, and so they surpass the poet. This happens all the more, the more the feeling of compassion is blended with awe.

Mendelssohn coined the notion of the "*moment fertile,*" the fruitful moment, which came to be so important for Lessing's writing on the Laocoön. Lessing wrote:

"Since the painter and sculptor express beauties successively, alongside each other, they must choose the moment which is most favorable to their intention. They must gather the entire action into one single point of view, and to distribute it with great understanding. Everything in this moment must be full of movement, and every secondary notion must contribute to the required significance.

"If we view such a painting, our senses are enthused at once, all capacities of our soul become suddenly awake, and the imagination can divine the past out of the present, and confidently await the future."

That is what Lyn mentioned as the paradox, that the Greek sculptors succeeded to show movement in one moment[1]; that is what distinguishes Greek Classical art from archaic works of art in a qualitative way. The artwork must have an element of *the simultaneity of eternity*. To discover the past, anticipate the future with confidence. That is the same as what Schiller will later describe about drama, as "the pregnant moment." It is the one point which contains the whole. That is fascinating. What is at stake is to promote the inner freedom of the human being.

The friendship between Mendelssohn and Lessing did not consist only in mutual support for their respective work, but also, in part, the way it should be among real friends: in polemical interventions. When Lessing wrote the draft on Laocoön in Breslau, where he was working as secretary to General Tauentzien, he went to the pubs with the soldiers, and gambled a great deal; Mendelssohn played a joke on him and printed one of his philosophical works with a dedication "to a strange person." The letter ended, saying: "If he doesn't hear, nor speak, nor feel, nor see, what does he do?—He plays." Lessing got quite a shock, because he thought that this dedication would have been printed on all copies, which it naturally was not.

This companionship of Lessing's, and that with the soldiers, also had positive effects, and it ultimately led to an elaboration in his play *Minna von Barnhelm*. Goethe wrote about this, that *Minna von Barnhelm* was the truest progeny of the Seven Years' War, completely northern German national in content. In 1772, Lessing wrote *Emilia Galotti,* in which his notion of tragedy is most clearly expressed.

In his later life, he was called to Hamburg to work as a dramaturge at the national theater there. Those were three years of hard struggle and disappointments over the dull wits of the audience, the vanity of the actors, and the interference of the merchants, who had no sense of what Lessing was doing. The theater was closed in 1768. The Duke of Braunschweig then asked him to become his librarian in Wolfenbüttel.

The last ten years of his life were years of suffering, with the exception of his unfortunately very brief marriage to Eva König, who died in childbirth. After that, Lessing lived alone, and his family, who lived in poverty, kept asking him for money. In 1781, he died of a stroke.

Thoughts on religion

In 1767, when Lessing went to Hamburg, Moses Mendelssohn wrote the *Phaedon,* the Platonic dialogue on the immortality of the soul, connecting up with the *Phaedo* of Plato, which Mendelssohn completed in his own words, addressing the problems of the eighteenth century. A polemic against the cynicism of the Enlightenment, the atheism of his time. This book became the most popular book of his time, and it was in the truest sense Socratic. In the introduction, he writes about Socratic discussion: It allows one to follow from question to question without any particular effort, so that one believes that one has not *learned* the truth, but has *found* it, oneself.

As Lyn said yesterday, the mind itself is brought to grasp knowledge by means of Socratic dialogue—not multiple choice and learning by heart, and then forgetting again; instead, the person is playfully elevated to a Socratic height.

Johann Gottfried von Herder wrote at that time about Mendelssohn's *Phaedon:*

1. Lyndon LaRouche's speech to the Oberwesel academy was published in *EIR,* Aug. 6, 1999.

"Socrates introduced the wisdom of the world among human beings, here is the philosophical writer of our nations, who joins this [wisdom] with beauty of style. . . . Yes, he is the one who knows how to place his wisdom of the world into a light of clarity, as if his Muse herself had said it."

This book made Mendelssohn famous as the Socrates of the eighteenth century. Frederick II nevertheless rejected the proposal to make Mendelssohn a member of the Academy.

Mendelssohn also worked on educating his fellow Jews, especially in Hebrew and in translating the Bible. He wrote:

"This is the first step to culture, from which my nation, unfortunately!, is held at such distance, that one might almost despair of any improvement."

In his *Jerusalem,* his interpretation of the Jewish notion of God, he wrote that there is no conflict between Faith and Reason:

"It is true, I know of no other eternal truths than those that are not only intelligible to human Reason, but which are representable by human capacities and achievable by them."

In that work, he appeals for an unlimited freedom of conscience in the state and society, and defines the state on the basis of natural law. The state and religion both have the task of promoting human happiness in this life and the next. They do not have the right to subject the principles and the conscience of people to any compulsion whatsoever. While the state may compel its citizens to act for the common good, religion cannot do that. It is understandable that Orthodox Jews and Christians alike were offended by many of these ideas.

Lessing also intervened in the religious debate. He received an unpublished work of the philologist Klotz from the daughter of the reputed Hamburg scholar, Reimarus: "Apology or Defense for the Reasonable, to the Honor of God," a polemic of the Enlightenment against the truth of Christianity. Lessing published this paper as a fragment by a so-called anonymous author, and pretended that it was a work from the collection of the Wolfenbüttel library. He complemented the document with his own additions and showed that the criticism was prejudiced and untenable. That drew the criticism of the orthodox theologians, and Lessing was wrongly suspected of being a proponent of the Enlightenment. The main criticism came from a Hamburg pastor, Goeze. Lessing was forced to make his own position clear, and unfortunately gave the impression that his opponents were among the theologians, and not in the camp of the Enlightenment.

Then Lessing wrote the play *Nathan der Weise* [*Nathan the Wise*] where he expresses his own most fundamental views on religion. Everyone knows the famous parable of the rings, where the dying king has a ring which bestows upon the bearer the love of God and man. Since the father does not want to favor any one of the sons over the others, he has two perfect copies made of the ring, so that each of the sons should think that he has the original. Naturally, the solution is only that the three sons, who represent Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, must each have the love of God and man in order to be the one on whom the ring is bestowed.

That is the most beautiful demonstration of the ecumenical idea in poetry, and Lessing's monument to Moses Mendelssohn.

Jacobi's campaign against Mendelssohn

How could it happen that the Socrates of the eighteenth century, the most famous philosopher of his time, could be so quickly forgotten? Here I have to discuss the evil role played by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, and also Kant. The whole problem began (in addition to the previous problems with Voltaire, etc.), with something that happened in Germany in 1785, which did not stop with Mendelssohn's death, and which made its influence felt into the nineteenth century.

Jacobi was a philosopher who led into romanticism and propounded a certain belief- and emotion-philosophy. He was the first to introduce the notion of nihilism into technical philosophical language. From him, the development can be followed to existentialist philosophy.

In July 1780, there was a discussion between Lessing and Jacobi. That was the beginning of the so-called pantheism debate between Mendelssohn and Jacobi. Supposedly, Jacobi asked Lessing during the discussion, "Have you actually ever explained your system to your friend M., does he know what you are talking about?" And Lessing supposedly replied, "Yes, once, when we once talked about paragraph 73 in the 'Education of Man,' and M. had reservations against it, so we discussed this point, but we did not reach agreement, so we let it be."

Jacobi now claimed that Lessing had preferred to be silent toward Mendelssohn about his ultimate beliefs, in order not to offend his friend. That is how it was represented by Jacobi in letters to Mendelssohn in 1783, after Lessing had died. He even claimed that Lessing had become a Spinozist in the last years of his life—i.e., an atheist. At that time, that was a horrible thing.

Mendelssohn was very angry at that. His friend Lessing had just died, and so he wrote a counter to this, the "Morgenstunden, or Lectures on the Existence of God," a kind of precaution in order to preempt Jacobi, because if there is anything one can say about Lessing's relationship to Spinoza, then it would be that he was an "enlightened Spinozist."

Jacobi then anonymously wrote, "The Doctrine of Spinoza in the Letters of Herr Moses Mendelssohn," which was published in Breslau in 1785. Mendelssohn was now really upset, since Jacobi had published a number of quotes from confidential letters of Mendelssohn to Jacobi. Mendelssohn countered with the work "To Lessing's Friends." On one cold winter morning, he brought this work to the printer, caught a cold, and died.

After his death, Jacobi wrote "Contra Mendelssohn's Accusations," in which he claimed that Lessing had admitted that Mendelssohn had had a clear mind, but no metaphysical mind. Mendelssohn, according to Jacobi's representation,

had become too stiff in the Leibniz-Wolf philosophical school, and did not have the strength to grasp something new, nor even the will to understand anything new; he was content to have found a system which satisfied him. The only source for all this is Jacobi himself, after both Lessing and Mendelssohn were dead.

Jacobi—in my opinion—is a liar, and he contradicts himself. Three years previously, he had written to his friend Heinz in Göttingen: "My friend Lessing tells me, Mendelssohn is the greatest philosopher of his age. I wish you would go to Berlin and become acquainted with this man, whom I esteem most highly as my friend." So, three years later, a complete change of view. Herder knew about this correspondence before Jacobi published it. He urgently requested Jacobi not to publish it.

Jacobi wrote to Herder: "I have thought about this, but I have come to the conclusion that I must let history take its course." So, Jacobi was absolutely aware of what he had done. He followed a strategy whose purpose was to discredit Mendelssohn and the ideas he stood for, and also, indirectly, Lessing. He wanted to kill off the very idea of the friendship between Lessing and Mendelssohn.

To fully appreciate this campaign, one has to know that Jacobi's notion of faith was not faith in God or faith as Christianity understands it, but rather, faith in the sense of David Hume, faith as the immediate intuitive acceptance of reality, where reason derives conceptions from previous experience. It was Mendelssohn's misunderstanding that this was a dispute between Judaism and Christianity. Jacobi cleverly changed the notion of faith to reason in the second edition.

Kant, who—as is known—denied the metaphysical proof of God and also the lawfulness of beauty in art, defended Mendelssohn, in his "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thought?" He based this defense on his theory of postulates, which again offended a number of people. With his defense, Kant did Mendelssohn no good service.

Jacobi was supported by Hölderlin, Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte. They simply accepted Jacobi's claims, but not in the sense that Spinoza was the same as atheism, but rather they accepted the picture of Mendelssohn that Jacobi painted. One has to consider that Mendelssohn was regarded to be the most important philosopher of his time. For example, Lichtenberg wrote from Göttingen to Nikolai, that he should write a biography of Mendelssohn, "because a Moses Mendelssohn does not die each century."

Hegel and also Schelling were initially influenced by Mendelssohn, but gradually the image became diffused into the shadow image provided by Jacobi. Fichte wrote in a letter to Reinhold, that he thought Jacobi was the most profound thinker of that time, greater than Kant—but that praise earned no thanks from Jacobi, because Jacobi later wrote a letter to Fichte in which he called Fichte's system atheism and nihilism. Fichte wrote, "Jacobi thinks I am a Moses Mendelssohn or like those who believe they have to rationalize a religion." Although he was the victim, Fichte stayed with the Mendelssohn image that Jacobi had painted. Hegel finally also moved to the view of Jacobi, whom he put on the same level as Kant. Jacobi and Kant had, according to Hegel, made sure that the old form of metaphysics was now finally extinguished. Suddenly, Mendelssohn was declared to be superficial, a populizer of Wolf's philology. People who knew Mendelssohn while he was still alive, now lied about him. The result of all of this is that Moses Mendelssohn has almost been completely forgotten, or is at best understood to be a "popular" philosopher.

We are dealing here with a classical case of slander. Comparable to what the democrats did with Socrates in Athens in ancient Greece. Or with the slanders against LaRouche in the twentieth century.

Pioneers of the Classics

But it was not Jacobi and Kant (Mendelssohn called the latter "the one who grinds everything down") who were right, but rather Thomas Abt, professor of mathematics in Rinteln and also a friend of Count Wilhelm von Schaumburg-Lippe, who wrote on July 20, 1765, concerning Mendelssohn's philosophical writings:

"Once again, our author begins a new epoch for us, and when he goes to the afterlife with Leibniz's *Theodicy,* Wolf's writings, Sulzer's and Spalding's works, then his German compatriots may flatter themselves, that he will excite a favorable idea of the entire century."

Indeed, if we today gain a positive idea of the eighteenth century, then that idea traces back to Mendelssohn and Lessing to a great extent. One must see the friendship between Mendelssohn and Lessing at the same level as that between Schiller, Körner, and the Humboldt brothers.

I want to read some short quotes from the correspondence of these two: Lessing to Mendelssohn, who had sent him his translation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writing on inequality:

"I have only read it [the letter] twice. The first time the friend occupied me so much, that I forgot the philosopher for him. I felt too much to be able to think about it. More I will not tell you, because I have learned not to babble about this point. I do not wish to dare to praise friendship, nor you; I want nothing else than to let myself be transported by it. I would wish to be worthy of your choice, as you are of mine! On the second reading, I was only concerned to understand your thoughts. They please me very much, although I will hold back some objections for our personal discussion."

On Nov. 18, 1756 he wrote:

"I ask you to think over, examine, improve what I have written to Herr N. Please fulfill my request, because it is the same as if I myself were to think it over, examine it and improve it. Your better thoughts are nothing but my own second thoughts."

On Nov. 28, 1756:

"You are my friend, I want my thoughts to be examined by you, not praised. I look forward to your further objections with pleasure, with which one can educate oneself."

On Dec. 18, 1756: "Live well, dearest friend, and do not tire of improving me, so shall you also not tire of loving me."

On Aug. 4, 1757: "Do not think that I would have a single fable printed that did not enjoy your complete approval."

On May 2, 1757: "Your ideas about 'Rule Over Inclinations,' 'On Habit,' 'On Viewing Knowledge,' are excellent, they have so persuaded me, that in my book I have not left a single word against them."

The correspondence shows such a degree of familiarity, such an intensity of cooperation and warmth, that Jacobi's arguments are shown to be absurd.

What the operations of Conti and Voltaire were earlier against Leibniz, now there was the attempt by Jacobi and Kant against Lessing and Mendelssohn.

Did they succeed? Not really. This circle of friends had its continuation in Schiller and his aesthetics, his idea of the aesthetical education of man. After all, Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt, who were educated by Moses Mendelssohn together with his own children, who therefore grew up in large part in the home of Mendelssohn, saw to it that the

The Yiddish Renaissance comes to America

The following are edited excerpts from remarks by Paul Kreingold and Kenneth Kronberg of the International Caucus of Labor Committees, in response to the Feb. 14, 1999 keynote address by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, on Moses Mendelssohn, at the ICLC's Presidents' Day Conference.

Kreingold: *change,* not assimilation

. . .[We've been] talking about the question of assimilation, of how Jews in eighteenth-century Germany were fighting Mendelssohn because they didn't want to assimilate into society, etc., and this raised a very interesting question for me, about how America developed, and how any nation develops. Why would you want to assimilate into eighteenth-century German society? Why would Martin Luther King want to assimilate into 1950 American society? You don't want to *assimilate*. What you want to do is, you want to *change* it, you want to lead it. And that's what's so interesting about the Mendelssohn project: these people weren't a minority group who were assimilating; they were leaders who were leading the society somewhere else, in a good direction. And, the same thing with Martin Luther King. God forbid, he should assimilate into 1950s America! No, he made a revolution in America, which changed it. . . .

Kronberg: Ideas make history

I want to follow up what Helga was saying about Moses Mendelssohn, because I think that it's a very good illustration of how ideas make history. . . .

The majority of the Jews in the nineteenth century, actually earlier, of course, lived in Poland, or what had been the Kingdom of Poland, which was this large area going all the way down to the Black Sea. They had gone there in around 1350, when they were invited in by Casimir the Great, and what happened in the nineteenth century was, that the followers of Mendelssohn and the Mendelssohn tradition in the Jewish community in German, took on the task of going into Poland and Russia, eastern Europe, and bringing the message of the German Classical renaissance to these people, who were much more backward than were the Jews of Germany. In fact, if you really want to understand it, you have to know that the majority of the Jews in Eastern Europe, the rabbis, were Hasidim, like these crazy nut-cases from New York who wield this disproportionate influence in Israel, and so on. These feudal medievalists—cabbalists, actually—controlled the Jewish community of Poland and eastern Europe.

So, the efforts of these rabbis in the nineteenth century, and students of Mendelssohn, were joined in a movement which was known as the *Haskalah* movement, which is translated as "Enlightenment"—an unfortunate term for us, of course, because it tends to imply Voltaire and all these bad guys. But, this Jewish Enlightenment went into eastern Europe and started essentially secular education. The works of Mendelssohn were burned, and there were huge fights going on, but eventually, from the mid-nineteenth century toward the end of the nineteenth century, you had the process by which there was created something which we know today as the Yiddish Renaissance. . . .

There was an effort on the part of young writers, to convey these advanced concepts to what was essentially a backward peasant population, through the medium of the Yiddish language. Of whom the greatest exponents are people like Mendele Mocher Sephorim, and I.L. Peretz, and of course, the person most people know, who is Sholem Aleichem. Now, it's unfortunate that people's familiarity with this Yiddish Renaissance, and someone like Sholem Aleichem, comes by way of the musical theater of Broadway, and *Fiddler on the Roof,* which bears the same relationship to the works of Sholem Aleichem, as *The Man of La Mancha* does to the works of Cervantes. This is a precise analogy, a conceptually drawn point, because what Sholem Aleichem was doing and what these writers were

Classics could emerge in Germany, poetry and music, the humanist system of education which Wilhelm von Humboldt was able to create, the highest summit of Western culture reached up to now.

Moses Mendelssohn is a universal example of how representatives of a repressed minority can shake off their chains and become the Socrates of their time. If we consider the current culture that surrounds us, embodied in Hollywood, then it is clear that we are already in a New Dark Age. But the situation looked rather dark at the time of Lessing and Mendelssohn, when Voltaire, Euler, and Maupertuis, and other Enlighteners, dominated intellectual life in Germany.

I believe we have a better chance today than these thinkers did then. We have more wells from which we can drink. Not only are the Greek Classics, the Italian Renaissance, and Leibniz open to us, but we can also reach back to Lessing and Mendelssohn, and also to Schiller, Humboldt, Beethoven, and many others in this tradition.

In this sense I close with the appeal to you, to become among the Socrates of the twenty-first century.

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doing, was precisely what Cervantes was doing, to a population living in a backward, inquisitorial circumstance, using humor to try to liberate the population and bring a more advanced viewpoint to it. One of these people, Mendele Mocher Sephorim, actually wrote a book which was a Jewish version of *Don Quixote*. So, these people were well versed, if you know their works, in the works of the European Classical renaissance.

Sholem Aleichem was the greatest example of this Yiddish Renaissance. At the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, in the situation of the pogroms, you had a mass emigration of Jews out of Poland, out of the Tsarist empire, out of the Pale of Settlement, to the United States. And Sholem Aleichem came with them and immigrated to the United States.

So that you understand something about this writer, about the Yiddish Renaissance, I'll tell you a story out of one of the books. He wrote a book called *Mottel, Peisi the Cantor's Son,* and also one called *Mottel in America,* which was the story of a family that comes to the United States. . . . The family is travelling with a student, who's probably in his mid-twenties, who's one of the *maskilim,* one of these exponents of the Mendelssohn tradition, one of these reformers, and he's their translator, because they don't speak any of the languages of the countries that they have to pass through to get to America from Europe. But, of course, treated in a very loving way, because Sholem Aleichem is the representative of the viewpoint of Mendelssohn's own personality, with this sort of gentle but polemical attitude toward people, he portrays these *maskilim* as people who really didn't know very much, but were supposedly well educated.

So, this guy gets to a border, and they meet a border-crossing guard, and he has to explain to the guard that this family is going across the border because we are on our way to America. But he can't speak the language really, he can only blurt out a couple of words. So he figures out what word to blurt out to the border guard to get the idea across. The first thing he blurts out is, "Columbus!," and the border guard doesn't know what he's talking about.

So, he scratches his head, and finally he blurts out, "Mathematics!" And, again, the border guard doesn't understand, so he comes up with the right thing to say. He says, "Alexander von Humboldt!" And that's how he expresses, these eastern European Jews coming out of the shtetl, what it means to come to America: "Columbus! Mathematics! Alexander von Humboldt!". . .

Now, when Sholem Aleichem came to the United States, he lived in New York, and there were 26 Yiddish newspapers in New York City at the turn of the century. You talk about a culture and a cultural tradition: When Sholem Aleichem died, 600,000 people—which was the largest demonstration ever held in New York City up to that point, and it may be historically to this point—marched down Fifth Avenue in the funeral cortège. . . .

Now, the children of those immigrants, of course, are Lyn's [Lyndon LaRouche's] generation. They are the people who fought in the Second World War, they're the people who came back, that's the generation which was the generation of adults in the 1950s, and those are the people who participated so heavily—that Jewish population, the children of those immigrants—were the people who participated so heavily in making the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1950s and 1960s. Because anyone who lived through that knows, that the Civil Rights Movement had this enormous, disproportionate presence of Jewish Americans. It was a movement of blacks and Jews. And, that's because of the tradition which they were carrying, which was a tradition which strangely enough came through this Yiddish Renaissance, conduiting what? The German Classical culture of Mendelssohn and Lessing and Schiller! . . .

Had it not been for the Holocaust, this Jewish population, as it existed in Europe, would still exist, and the insanity of what is going on in Israel could never have happened. It just wouldn't have happened, it wouldn't have been plausible. . . .

It's also the reason why there's such an enormously disproportionate number of Jews amongst the membership and leadership of this organization. It's the same process.