Herder is often criticized for having embraced cultural relativism, but there has been little philosophical discussion of what he actually wrote about the nature of the human species and its differentiation through culture. This book focuses on Herder's idea of culture, seeking to situate his social and political theses within the context of his anthropology, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, theory of language, and philosophy of history. It argues for a view of Herder as a qualified relativist, who combined the conception of a common human nature with a belief in the importance of culture in developing and shaping that nature. Especially highlighted are Herder's understanding of the relativity of virtue and happiness, and his belief in the impossibility of constructing a single best society. The book will appeal to a wide range of readers interested both in Herder and in Enlightenment culture more generally.

Sonia Sikka is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Ottawa.
HERDER ON HUMANITY AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

Enlightened Relativism

SONIA SIKKA

University of Ottawa
To the beautiful, terrible land of my birth. I love you still, in spite of everything.
Acknowledgements

Note on citation style

Whenever I have cited directly from an English translation of a work by Herder or another author, reference is given to the translation, with, in most cases, a cross-reference to an edition of the original text. Thus, “FW 4, 839/PW, 270” refers to p. 839 of volume 4 of Herder’s Werke in zehn Bänden, and p. 270 of the English translation in Philosophical Writings, both of which are listed in the bibliography. Likewise, “CPrR, 23/AA 5, 25” refers to p. 23 of the English translation of Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason, and p. 25 of volume 5 of the Akademie Ausgabe of the original German text. When no reference to an English translation is given, the translation is mine, though I have frequently consulted existing translations in producing my own.

In the case of references to major works by Herder and Kant, and a few other primary sources, I have preferred to use abbreviated titles in my text, rather than dates and volume numbers. This is because I wish the reader to know, or to be able to ascertain very easily, which work I am citing or to which I am referring.
Abbreviations and works cited by title

Works by Herder
APH – Yet Another Philosophy of History (FW 4)
Briefe – Briefe: Gesamtausgabe (Herder 1977)
Cognition – “On the Human Soul’s Cognition and Sensation” (FW 4)
Fragments – Fragments on Recent German Literature (FW 1)
FW – Werke in zehn Bänden (Herder 1985–)
God – God: Some Conversations (Herder 1940)
Hebrew Poetry – On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry (FW 5)
Ideas – Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind (FW 6)
LAH – Letters for the Advancement of Humanity (FW 7)
Language – On the Origin of Language (FW 1)
Metacritique – Metacritique of the Critique of Pure Reason (FW 8)
PW – Philosophical Writings (Herder 2002a)
Sculpture – Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from
Pygmalion’s Creative Dream (Herder 2002b)
Suphan – Herders Sämtliche Werke (Herder 1893)
SWA – Selected Writings on Aesthetics (Herder 2006)

Works by Kant
AA – Werke, Akademie Ausgabe (Kant 1902–)
APPV – Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View (Kant 1978)
CJ – Critique of the Power of Judgement (Kant 2000)
CPrR – Critique of Practical Reason (Kant 1997a)
Gr – Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (Kant 1997b)
MM – Metaphysics of Morals (Kant 1996)
PP – Perpetual Peace and Other Essays (Kant 1983)
Religion – Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone (Kant 1960)
Abbreviations and works cited by title

TPP – “On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy”
(Kant 2001)

WORKS BY OTHER AUTHORS

BT – Being and Time (Heidegger 1962)
Mémoires – Mémoires concernant les Chinois par les missionaires de Pékin, 17 vols. (1776–1814)
Œuvres complètes – Œuvres complètes de Buffon (Buffon 1853)
PH – The Philosophy of History (Hegel 1991)
PT – Philosophy and Truth (Nietzsche 1979)
Sämtliche Schriften – Georg Forsters Werke (Forster 1958–)