

Physiognomy in Profile

Lavater's Impact on European Culture

Edited by
Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler



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The Physiognomy of Inner Bodies: Hermetic and Sensualist Patterns of Argument in the Work of Johann Caspar Lavater

Maximilian Bergengruen

IN THIS ESSAY I DEMONSTRATE HOW LAVATER ATTEMPTS TO LINK THE TWO main areas of his thinking, namely, resurrection theology and physiognomy, by referring back to the philosophy of German sensualism associated with Herder and Jacobi. In particular, Lavater believes that the concept of "Gefühl" [feeling] provides a link between the physiognomic judgment of an *external* form, on the one hand, and the *inner* experience of an immediate presence of the divine, on the other. The central thesis of the second part of my essay is that Lavater, in establishing this link, revives a figure of thought from the early modern period while investing it with contemporary concepts: this is the signature theory of Paracelsus. For in fact, Paracelsus also regards physiognomy as a theological project that is based on the assumption of an immediate presence of the divine in man. However, signature theory for Lavater is not just a pattern to be applied; he also uses it creatively as a theoretical mine to be exploited. The Swiss theologian finds here the missing pieces that will make the link between physiognomy and theology a theoretically viable one.

* * *

In the seventh letter of his *Aussichten in die Ewigkeit* [Prospects of Eternity, 1768–78], Lavater speaks of having had reason to

vermuthen, daß es auf dieser Erde . . . einen . . . Ort gebe, wo sich die abgeschiedenen Seelen versammeln; und sich entweder auf den Tag der Auferstehung als auf einen Hochzeitstag vorbereiten, oder als einem fürchterlichen Executionstage mit einer namenlosen Verzweiflung entgegen zittern.

[suspect that there is a place on this earth where the departed souls assemble and prepare for the day of resurrection, as if for a wedding, or shuddering with a nameless dread of a terrible day of execution.]¹

But for Lavater, all this is as nothing compared with the states that the soul will have passed through “an dem Gerichtstag bey der Verwandlung ihres Leibes” [on the Day of Judgment at the metamorphosis of the body] (AW, 2:93). But how exactly is the concept of the metamorphosis of the body supposed to function? Lavater here goes back to Charles Bonnet, who, in his *Contemplation de la Nature* (1764), linked the idea of preformation with a kind of resurrection theology by introducing the concept of a “geistlichen . . . Leib” [spiritual body].² Thanks to his reading of Bonnet, Lavater felt certain that the soul is not only clothed in a “gröbern Körper” [coarse body], but also in a “feinen . . . Körper” [fine body] (AW, 2:90). After death, the soul tears itself free from the shell of the external body, but retains the inner body, so that “mittelst der veränderten feinern Sinne dieses mitgenommen Körpers, ganz andre Vorstellungen von den Dingen . . . einsammelt” [through the transformed, finer senses of this transported body it may develop completely new concepts of things] (AW, 2:91). As may be gathered from all this, the external, perceivable body contains an additional internal one which enables the soul after death, that is, after its separation from the physical body, to continue to exist as it waits for resurrection. This inner body has different sensory equipment which, in turn, is capable of new concepts—equipment made possible by a substance unknown to the natural body, namely, “ätherisches vehiculum,” or ether (AW, 2:91).

Lavater has his reasons for describing the temporary ethereal body in such detail, for it is closely connected with the ultimately heavenly or divine body after resurrection, which he understands to be made, as Christ’s body was at his Ascension, of “feinste Lichttheilchen” [the tiniest particles of light] (AW, 2:118). The divine body, Lavater speculates, is produced from “die persönliche Beschaffenheit der Seele, und der damit übereinstimmenden Beschaffenheit des geistigen Vehiculums” [the personal constitution of the soul and the corresponding constitution of the spiritual vehiculum] (AW, 2:123). The reason the divine body is supposed to be the product of the ethereal interim body has to do with the paradoxical fact that the body has “changed” (1 Cor. 15:51; AV), even though it is already dead. Lavater resolves this paradox by postulating—with some reservations—that the spiritual body is the same as the ethereal body. And since this body continues to exist after death, it can also be awakened and transformed, even when the soul has long since departed from the earthly body: “Eben derselbe Leib, wenigstens die *Quintessenz*, das organisierte *Stamen* desselben, wird erweckt” [That very same body, or at least the quintessence of it, the organized stamen of it (in other words, the ethereal body) is awakened] (AW, 2:123).

The ethereal body thus takes on a key position for Lavater in the resurrection debate in that it guarantees the immortality of the soul and creates a continuity between earthly and heavenly life. How are these highly spec-

ulative theological explanations of the “Unterziehkörperchen” [underwear body], as Jean Paul humorously describes it, connected with Lavater’s concept of physiognomy?³

Lavater’s physiognomy has a deliberate lack of system and theory:⁴ only accidentally did the author of the *Fragmente* stumble on the field of physiognomy, or so he claims.⁵ However, in the course of Lavater’s exposition, this lack of direction is shown to have its own method. Lavater does not attempt to prove his theory scientifically, but rather to make it “fühlbar” [emotionally tangible] (*Fr.*, 1:44). Physiognomy sets no axioms, develops no rules of its own, but is rather the continuation of a practice that pre-exists all scientific thought, indeed all conscious reflection:

Alle Menschen, (so viel ist unwidersprechlich,) urtheilen in allen, allen, allen—Dingen nach ihrer Physiognomie, ihrer Aeußerlichkeit, ihrer jedesmaligen Oberfläche. Von dieser schließen sie durchgehends, täglich, augenblicklich auf ihre innere Beschaffenheit.

[All people (and this much is incontestable) judge all, all, all things on the basis of physiognomy, external appearance, superficial characteristics. From these are made judgments about their inner constitution—constantly, daily, instantaneously.] (*Fr.*, 1:47)

Physiognomy is so deeply embedded in pre-scientific daily life, in pre-reflexive “Gefühl” (*Fr.*, 2:9), and in prephilosophical language, that refutation becomes impossible. This is because all opponents of physiognomy get tied up in a performative contradiction: they deny the validity of physiognomy but at the same time they use its means—instinct, practice, language (*Fr.*, 1:20).⁶

This prereflexive foundation also means that physiognomy cannot be proven in a strictly scientific sense (*Fr.*, 1:44). When Lavater nonetheless uses the word “proof,” he does not mean it in a logical or legal sense. Rather, he relies on the evidence of his trans-subjective experience. Physiognomy is not science, but the “Wissenschaft der Wissenschaften” [science of sciences], because its rules are in us all prior to academic examination (*Fr.*, 1:55). The locus of this unavoidable system of rules is “Menschengefühl” [human instinct] and “Empfindung” [sensation] (*Fr.*, 1:55). The processes which are called into play in this ability can be brought to the surface of language and thought by means of physiognomy, and there refined and systematized. In his argument, sensualist patterns of thought become clear, and these are similar to those found in Herder and later in Jacobi.⁷ Herder states in *Zum Sinn des Gefühls* [On the Sense of Feeling]: “Vom Gefühl aus muß sich also . . . alles ausgehen, und dahin zurückkommen—welche vortreffliche Unternehmung alle Begriffe dahin zu reduzieren!” [Everything must begin with and go back to feeling—what an

excellent enterprise to reduce all concepts to this starting point!].⁸ "Gefühl" signifies a universal value which at the same time includes "*unmittelbare Gegenwart . . . in uns*" [immediate presence within us] as well as "*Empfindung von Außen*" [sensation from outside].⁹ Hence, the concept of feeling used by German sensualism comprises two things: first, a link between external perception and inner experience; second, a prereflexive certainty of man from which the unity of the person and all its intellectual endeavors can be directly deduced.

Lavater's teacher, Johann Joachim Spalding, also uses the concept of an "innigsten Empfindung" [intimate sensation] as the foundation for a certainty of selfhood in his *Bestimmung des Menschen*, although he is, in fact, still tied to the categories of natural law and the Wolffian school of philosophy.¹⁰ However, the sensualist conception of the inevitability of a prereflexive certainty in the realm of feeling takes a curious turn in Lavater's work. Whereas Herder and Jacobi work on the basis of a general, original feeling, Lavater replaces this with a particular feeling which he calls "physiognomic instinct." And it is just this that makes it so difficult to link Lavater's physiognomic theory to his theology. For Herder and Jacobi, it is precisely the original nature of feeling that allows us to experience transcendence. Only the fundamental "sentiment de l'être" [sense of being], a later intellectual device of Jacobi's, leads us to recognize God as the "first and only principle, as the true original being."¹¹ With Lavater, "feeling" is a somewhat more tangible thing. Thus, instead of showing an all-consuming sensation of being, Lavater is concerned, for example, with the interpretation of individual character, a practice that seems to have nothing to do with the transcendental, and stands despite his claim that "[r]eligion for me is physiognomy, and physiognomy is religion."

* * *

How, then, it may be asked, does Lavater succeed in reconciling theological speculation with a pragmatic science such as physiognomy? I wish to show in what follows that the two such seemingly heterogeneous parts of Lavater's theory, namely, physiognomy and resurrection theology (in particular the idea of an inner body), possess an internal correlation which is made more comprehensible by tracing their genealogical roots in the early modern period. My paradigm here is Paracelsus's philosophy of nature.

For Paracelsus, physiognomy is a subdiscipline of signature theory, a science whose aim it is to decode the manifestations of nature as expressions of their own inner powers. The external form of any phenomenon produced by nature points to what lies within that phenomenon and specifically so through the similarity between its shape and its essence, whether it has to do with a human being or a blade of grass. In other words, the ex-

ternal form is “nach dem Gemüt . . . [ge]schmiedet” [shaped according to its inner being], not the other way around.¹² Internal and external represent different stages in a development from the inside to the outside, which is considered immanent by Paracelsus.

For Paracelsus, the concept of signatures is heavily dependent on his concept of nature as a revelatory agent. As he says in *Philosophia magna*:

Dan nichts ist, das verborgen bleibe und nit geoffenbaret, es mub alles herfür, geschöpf, natur, geist, bös und guts, außen und innen, und all künst und alle doctrinen, ler und was beschaffen ist.

[For nothing exists which remains hidden and shall not be revealed, everything must come forth, being, nature, spirit, evil and good, inside and out, and all arts and all doctrines, teachings, and that which is created.]¹³

The signatures are thus the visual elements of one great process of revelation, within which all the hidden powers and virtues of nature become clear or comprehensible to human beings as knowledge and technology. To put this more precisely, the signatures, which point toward, but do not lay bare, inner being, serve a kind of function of attraction or catalysis within that gift for knowledge that God has bestowed on the human race. These signatures exhort man to incorporate the hidden forces and virtues of nature within his own spheres of practical and theoretical knowledge, and thus perform the process of revelation within himself.

Central to signature theory is the human being—and hence physiognomy. Indeed, the human body is a privileged object through which knowledge is transmitted. As in the case of stones, plants, and animals, human signatures also point toward a hidden interior. The shape of the hands [“chiromantia”], the face [“physiognomia”], the rest of the body [“substantia”] as well as gestures and body language [“mos” and “usus”] are important clues for “Erkenntnis des Menschen” [understanding humankind] (*AM*, 35).

What, then, are the specifically human virtues and powers, that is to say, the inner being as indicated by the bodily signatures? For Paracelsus it is important for us to know that “der himel in uns wirket” [heaven works within us] (*SW*, 1, 8:163), and imprints its signature in us, and that the human signatures point, not to elemental nature, as in the case of animals, stones and rocks, but to a sidereal nature.¹⁴ To put it another way, the “astra im leib” [stars within the body] (*SW*, 1, 8:160) are to be found in a second, inner body, which, by virtue of its invisibility, is different from the external one. As Paracelsus says,

daß . . . zwei *corpora* vom *limo terrae* genommen werden sollen, das eine sichtbar, das andere unsichtbar. . . . Aus dem folgt nun, daß *lumen naturae* allein in dem unsichtbaren Leib influirt und operiert.

[two bodies are supposed to be made of the *limo terrae*, the one visible, the other invisible. From this follows that *lumen naturae* flows and operates only in the invisible body.] (*AM*, 39f.)

The external body is a product of the elements, while the inner body is a product of the stars (*SW*, 1, 10:643). This inner body lies on the borderline between the material and the spiritual, but is explicitly differentiated from the immortal soul by its very mortality (*SW*, 1, 10:644; *AM*, 40).

Through physiognomy, the human being comes to understand the human body, and hence the existence of the "wisdom, sense and reason" that have been conferred on us by the stars. The science of "understanding humankind," which may be seen as an early form of anthropology, cannot help also being a kind of physiognomy in its need to lay bare the inner man. Paracelsus conceives of the inner being and its corresponding physical signature as manifestations of individuality and hence as a consequence of man's Fall:

Als er [Adam] . . . Böses und Gutes erkannte, da fiel er in die Natur. Da wurde die Natur gewaltig, einen jeglichen zu zeichnen—das ist: formieren—, nach dem das Gemüt ist und war. . . . Darum sieht kein Mensch dem anderen gleich, aus der Ursache: daß jegliches einen anderen Sinn hat. . . . Denn der Mensch ist damit [dem Sündenfall] in eine andere Eigenschaft gekommen; darum also muß er dulden, dieweil er eine andere Eigenschaft an sich hat, [daß er] nach derselbigen gezeichnet worden [ist].

[As he [Adam] recognized good and evil, so he fell into nature. Nature took on the power to design—that is, to form—everything according to what its mind is and was. That is why no man is identical to another, because each has a different mind. Thus [through the fall from grace] man took on another character; he must therefore accept, with this different character, that he is designed in accordance with it.] (*AM*, 115)

Such words echo the Neoplatonic claim that, as soon as man disobeys the universal and single will of God, he is exposed to the multiplicity of wills that control nature, whether in his mind or in his outward appearance.

In Paracelsus's view, original sin, that is, individuality, is redeemed by Christ's crucifixion and through imitation of his life. The individual should take the "creuz auf sein rücken, das ist das joch, das im die natur aufgelegt hat, . . . und Jesus nachfolgen" [bear the cross on his back, which is the yoke that nature has placed upon him, and imitate Christ]—and this until death (*SW*, 1, 14:186). In his concept of the imitation of Christ, Paracelsus goes so far as to suggest that the individual, like Christ, must be resurrected with his or her body: "Als wir haben in der geschrift, das wir werden auferstan am jüngsten tag in unserm leib" [As is stated in the scriptures, we shall be res-

urrected on the day of reckoning in our own bodies] (*SW*, 1, 9:117). Here Paracelsus is referring to Rom. 8:11:

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also give life to your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Christ's ascension and man's resurrection from the dead thus both take place in the same spirit—and in Pauline theology in the same body; to be precise, in the *σῶμα πνευματικόν* [spiritual body] (1 Cor. 15:44; cf. also Phil. 3:21), an idea we have already found in Lavater. The spiritual body has the same relationship to the natural body as Christ's salvation of the world has to the Fall of Man. At the same time, in order to incorporate this theological idea of the soul after death into his physiognomic thinking, Paracelsus comes up with the following notion of the divine or heavenly body:

Das tödliche Fleisch läßt ihn [den Menschen] nicht gen Himmel kommen. Darum hat Christus ihm ein neues Fleisch und Blut gegeben, damit er in einem Leib, Blut und Fleisch sei, und dasselbige Fleisch . . . kommt gen Himmel. . . . Das tödliche Fleisch ist vom Vater, wie Adam und seine Nachkommenden; das kommt wieder dahin, davon es genommen ist.

[Mortal flesh does not allow him [man] to enter the kingdom of Heaven. Therefore Christ has given him new flesh and blood, so that he should possess a body, flesh and blood, and this flesh may enter Heaven. The mortal flesh is of the father, like Adam and his descendants; it returns from whence it came.] (*AM*, 195)

The introduction of a third body becomes necessary, for at resurrection neither the elemental (visible) body nor the sidereal (invisible) body would come into question, for both are subject to death through Adam's "Breachung des Gebots" [transgression] (*AM*, 195).

From a modern perspective, this tripling of the body may seem complicated, but for the Renaissance it was nothing unusual: man *qua* microcosm is constructed in a manner analogous to the cosmos, which is itself divided into divine, sidereal and elemental. The divine body is understood as a "neue[r] Leib" [new body] (*AM*, 201), namely, as a second birth as against the first, Adam's birth (*SW*, 1, 14:273). However, man does not come into contact with the divine body until after death. The divine body is like the sidereal within us, because the Christian, by being baptized, "von christlichem Blut geboren ist" [is born of Christ's blood] (*AM*, 197), and thus is part of "der Inkarnation, die vom Heiligen Geist . . . geschaffen wird, welche den Leib der Auferstehung gibt" [the incarnation created by the Holy Spirit that provides the body of resurrection] (*AM*, 197). The sidereal

and divine bodies are thus similar to the Holy Spirit not only internally and invisibly, but also substantially. In other words, the internal and the external actually resemble each other through some natural process. But can the natural and the godly resemble each other? According to Paracelsus they can, at least for those who think with their heart rather than with their "Maul" ["gob"] (*SW*, 1, 10:641). Such philosophers know that the light of nature and the light of grace are connected or, to be precise, are within each other (*SW*, 1, 10:641). And what is true of light is also true of the three bodies of man in that these are encapsulated within each other. Thus the individual, in his attempt at a physiognomic self-reading, cannot stop at the external or at the sidereal body, but must work onward toward the divine body by a sort of epistemological peeling of layers of skin. Since self-knowledge is conceived of as a progressive disembodiment, the divine body therefore not only exists as a hidden principle, but offers the individual engaged in this enterprise the chance of a divine life on earth. By thus transcending his body, the "reine Christ" [pure Christian] would not only "sein creuz . . . Christo nachtragen" [carry his cross in imitation of Christ] (*SW*, 1, 14:273), but also experience his own death in the sense of being "zum andern mal geboren" [born a second time] (*SW*, 1, 14:273). This is virtually an earthly anticipation of divine resurrection.

The opportunity for this leap from science, or signature theory, to moral theology lies in the aforementioned description of nature as a factor in the creation of individuality. Physiognomy, seen as a medium of revelation, reverses this very individuality in human nature by bringing the inside to the outside, until only the "godly one" remains. Just as all this thought is linked with the idea of the imitation of Christ, so Christ's death has its metaphorical equivalent in the death of natural individuality and in a mystical union with God. In connection with this, Paracelsus quotes Christ's words: "der mit mir wil sein, der verleugne sein selbs, das ist, er verleugne der dingen, so [er] aus der natur hat" [He who would be with me must deny himself, that is, he must deny the things he has from nature] (*SW*, 1, 14:185). Theological or mystical morality becomes a continuation of natural science by other means.

* * *

With the foregoing in mind, let us now return to Lavater. It was partly through Morhoff's *Polyhistor* that Lavater became familiar with Paracelsus's physiognomic thinking.¹⁵ Moreover, the relation between natural philosophy and resurrection theology as postulated by Paracelsus is present in eighteenth-century thought.¹⁶ Thus, it is with some awareness of Paracelsus that Lavater adopts Bonnet's theory of the "kleine[n] ätherische[n] Maschine" [small, ethereal machine] as the "Keim dieses geistlichen und verklärten Leibes, den die Offenbarung dem thierischen und groben Leibe

entgegen setzt" [germ of this spiritual and transfigured body, which revelation sets up in contrast to the animal and coarse body].¹⁷ Indeed, like Paracelsus, Lavater points out, in a discussion of the divine body, that, in spite of its beautification in death, the human body retains its similarity to the earthly body. Lavater uses this argument to postulate the divine body on the basis of his knowledge of the earthly body (through the interim stage of the ethereal body). In other words, he regards the divine body as the earthly body in a more perfect and stronger form, which is epistemologically more useful and more capable of morality and politics than the earthly body itself.¹⁸

Lavater places special emphasis on the divine body's ability to receive knowledge. And if the divine body is really modeled on the earthly one, then, as Lavater concludes:

So sind wir vermögend, . . . alle Werke Gottes, so groß und so klein sie auch immer seyn mögen, von innen und von aussen zu erforschen und zu beschauen; wir haben das Bürgerrecht in allen Welten, weil wir das Bürgerrecht im Himmel der Himmel haben. . . . Für uns ist die ganze Schöpfung offen, und die geheimnißreiche Natur hat keine Geheimnisse mehr für uns.

[We have the ability to explore and observe all of the works of God, be they great or small, from within and without; we have the right of citizenship in all worlds, for we have the right of citizenship in the Heaven of Heavens. The whole of creation lies before us, and the mysteries of nature are no mysteries more for us.] (AW, 2:312)

Once the individual has lost his external physiognomy he no longer needs physiognomy (or other signature-reading techniques), since God's creation is now open to him not only "from without" but also "from within." As we saw earlier with respect to Paracelsus, Lavater sees mankind as the instrument of continuous revelation until the Last Judgment. But while the earthly individual has no body of light that would reveal the inside as well as the outside of things to him, he must be content with such imperfect methods as inferring the "innere Beschaffenheit" [internal constitution] (*Fr.*, 1:47) from the external features—in other words, physiognomy.¹⁹

If physiognomy can be understood as an attempt to attain the sensory receptivity of the divine body, we are dealing with a classical *petitio principii*, for the sensory receptivity of the divine body, as I have indicated above, is won by the physiognomic technique of drawing conclusions about the inside from the outside. Indeed, Lavater had worked out the appearance and constitution of the divine body by drawing conclusions from the earthly one—a conclusion functioning in accordance with the physiognomic rule, namely, that the inner, or in this case, the divine—is "eine un-mittelbare Fortsetzung des Aeußern" [an unbroken continuation of the ex-

terior] (*Fr.*, 1:33).²⁰ This *petitio* can only be avoided by aligning physiognomy with a belief in immortality—an alignment hinted at in the following statement from the *Fragmente*:

Ich ende mit einem hohen Trostworte für mich und alle, die wir noch Ursache genug haben, über manches Stück unserer Physiognomie und Bildung, die vielleicht hienieden nicht mehr zu tilgen sind, unzufrieden zu seyn—und die dennoch emporstreben nach Vervollkommnung des inneren Menschen: / *Es wird in Unehre gesäet und herrlich auferweckt.*

[I shall end with highly consoling words for myself and for all, who have cause enough to be dissatisfied with many a piece of our physiognomy and inner formation that can no longer be redeemed down here on Earth—and yet strive towards the perfection of the inner being: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory.] (*Fr.*, 1:77)

If Lavater believes that the sciences and arts can improve mankind both inwardly and outwardly, he does so on the physiognomic premise that the inner being matches the outward person. Physiognomy is thus seen to be fundamental to the idea of human perfection. At the same time, physiognomy can give us a glimpse of the state we shall eventually find ourselves in through our divine bodies, whereby the inner and the outer will have become one and the same thing. For Lavater, the idea of the resurrection of the dead is something that, according to 1 Cor. 15:14, can be grasped essentially by means of the physiognomic instinct. Indeed, for Lavater, there can be no physiognomy without a belief in immortality, which is, after all, nothing but a radicalization of our physiognomic efforts. By reading the earthly body we perfect the “inner man,” and thus bring it nearer to the divine body.

Lavater’s physiognomic thinking, as we have seen, is shot through with the theology of the early modern period, and also with German philosophical sensualism. Lavater makes use of the Paracelsian notion of signature theory, at the same time as he abandons the practice of arguing *from* anthropology *to* theology in favor of seeing anthropology and theology as interdependent branches of learning. This he does by bringing belief and feeling together within the concept of “Gefühl,” as understood by Herder and Jacobi. For Herder, for example, the original feeling is immediately accompanied by the “empfinden” [sensation], “denken” [thought] and “lieben” [love] of God as well as of the “Unsterblichkeit der Seele” [immortality of the soul].²¹ At the same time, Lavater attempts to solve the problem of the equivalence between general feeling and the so-called physiognomic instinct outlined above with reference to the physiognomy of the early modern period. It is precisely the theological implications of the theory of signatures that make it necessary to see physiognomy as more than just a

secular anthropological technique. Rather, Lavater must have seen them as a link between natural and supernatural life—thus reaching the fundamental “Gefühl” that was also envisaged by Herder and Jacobi.

This crossover between two historically separate strands of theory consequently entails a metaphysical apotheosis of physiognomy. When Lavater understands his project as making visible the “Antlitz Gottes im Antlitz des Menschen” [the countenance of God in the countenance of man] (*Fr.*, 1:b2f.), this is precisely because it is physiognomy that describes the inseparable link between the supernatural and the (sensorily perceptible) earthly. Behind the simple and secular formula that the “Aeußerliche . . . nichts, als die Endung, die Gränzen des Inneren ist” [the external is nothing but the edge, the frontiers of the internal] (*Fr.*, 1:33) lies the combination of a sense of reality (in the “external”) with a foretaste of the divine (in the “internal”) that so often typifies German sensualism.

This is, to conclude, an attempt to reconstruct Lavater’s *theory*. Reading Lavater’s work with physiognomic *practice* in mind, one would have to note that he was under great pressure to emphasize the close links between theology and physiognomy. At the time he was writing, discrepancies between theological views of the world and empirical scientific ones were becoming ever more apparent. In such a climate, Lavater needed to construct his arguments with great care, and use all his rhetorical skills in order to withstand criticism. But this would be subject matter for another paper.

NOTES

1. Johann Caspar Lavater, *Ausgewählte Werke in historisch-kritischer Ausgabe*, ed. R. Dellsberger et al. (Zurich: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2001), 2:93. Henceforth referred to as *AW*.

2. Charles Bonnet, *Betrachtungen über die Natur*, ed. and trans. J. D. Titius (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1772), 85.

3. Jean Paul, *Werke*, ed. N. Miller (Munich: Hanser, 1959–85), 2:779, 603. See also Maximilian Bergengruen, *Schöne Seelen, groteske Körper: Anthropologie und Ästhetik in den Romanen Jean Pauls* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2003).

4. On Lavater’s lack of system, see Johannes Saltzwedel, *Das Gesicht der Welt. Physiognomisches Denken in der Goethezeit* (Munich: Fink, 1993), 77. See also Carsten Zelle, “Soul Semiology. On Lavater’s Physiognomic Principles,” in *The Faces of Physiognomy: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Johann Caspar Lavater*, ed. Ellis Shookman (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993), 40–63.

5. Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente* (Leipzig and Winterthur, 1775–78), 1:9. Henceforth referred to as *Fr.*

6. On the performative contradiction in German sensualism, see Maximilian Bergengruen, “‘Anliegen unserer Leiber’: Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi und der performative Widerspruch,” *Athenäum* 11 (2001): 37–54.

7. On Lavater’s relationship with Herder, and Herder’s negative attitude, see Heinrich Clairmont, “‘Un tableau vivant’: Herders physiologisch fundierte Psychologie, Lavaters Physiognomik und ein Disput in der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften,” *Herder Yearbook* 2 (1996): 57–80.

8. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke*, ed. G. Arnold et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), 4:235.

9. Ibid. On Herder's sensualist Platonism, which underpins this concept of "feeling," see Ralf Simon, *Das Gedächtnis der Interpretation: Gedächtnistheorie als Fundament für Hermeneutik, Ästhetik und Interpretation bei Johann Gottfried Herder* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998), 26.

10. Johann Joachim Spalding, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1768), 57. On Lavater's relationship with Spalding, see Gisela Luginbühl-Weber, "'Zu thun, was Sokrates gethan hätte': Lavater, Mendelssohn und Bonnet über die Unsterblichkeit," in *Das Antlitz Gottes im Antlitz des Menschen: Zugänge zu Johann Caspar Lavater*, ed. K. Pestalozzi and H. Weigelt (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1994), 114–48. Richard Gray, while connecting Lavater both to scientific positivism and to *Sturm und Drang*, ignores his sensualist patterns of argument. See Richard T. Gray, "Aufklärung und Anti-Aufklärung: Wissenschaftlichkeit und Zeichenbegriff in Lavaters 'Physiognomik,'" in *Das Antlitz Gottes*, ed. Pestalozzi and Weigelt, 166–78; and idem, "Die Geburt des Genies aus dem Geiste der Aufklärung," *Poetica* 23 (1991): 95–138 (137). More precise in this respect is Karl Pestalozzi, "Physiognomische Methodik," in *Germanistik aus interkultureller Perspektive*, ed. A. Finck and Gertrud Gréciano (Strasbourg: Université des Sciences Humaines, 1988), 137–53. Pestalozzi makes a distinction between the methodology of the *Fragmente* and that of *Von der Physiognomik*, arguing that the latter is in fact much more scientific.

11. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke*, ed. K. Hammacher and W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998), 1:105, 1:263.

12. Paracelsus, *Astronomia magna oder die ganze Philosophia sagax der großen und kleinen Welt*, ed. N. Winkler (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 65. Henceforth referred to as *AM*.

13. Paracelsus, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K. Sudhoff (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1929), 1, 14:131. Henceforth referred to as *SW*.

14. The constellations are thought of by Paracelsus dynamically as regulating the "Lauf" [movements] of the stars and of people (*AM*, 65). Accordingly, Paracelsus's physiognomic ideas are not set in stone. This contrasts with the account of Rüdiger Campe, who starts from the assumption that a dynamization of physiognomy occurred only around 1700 (although the two concepts of "dynamism" are not entirely compatible): *Affekt und Ausdruck: Zur Umwandlung der literarischen Rede im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990), 419, 433. Ursula Geitner also sees a specific dynamism in the physiognomy of the eighteenth century, and thus also in Lavater, as an innovation: "Klartext: Zur Physiognomik Johann Caspar Lavaters," in *Geschichten der Physiognomik. Text, Bild, Wissen*, ed. R. Campe and M. Schneider (Freiburg: Rombach, 1996), 357–86.

15. Daniel Georg Morhoff, *Polyhistor: Literarius, philosophicus et practicus* (Lübeck: Boeckmann, 1774), 3:454, 118.

16. Saltzwedel, *Gesicht der Welt*, 79.

17. Bonnet, *Betrachtungen*, 85. On Lavater's reading of the *Betrachtungen*, see Luginbühl-Weber, "Sokrates," 116.

18. *AW*, 2:432, 434, 441.

19. Karl Pestalozzi discusses Lavater's conception of physiognomy "as a contribution to the attainment of the divine state on Earth": "Lavaters Utopie," in *Literaturwissenschaft und Geschichtsphilosophie*, ed. H. Arntzen et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 283–301 (300). On this subject, see also Ulrich Stadler, "Novalis und Lavater: Hardenbergs 'höhere Physiognomie' im 'Heinrich von Ofterdingen,'" in *Physiognomie und Pathognomie: Zur literarischen Darstellung von Individualität*, ed. Wolfram Groddeck and Ulrich Stadler (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 186–201 (194). On Lavater's christology, soteriology and eschatology,

see Horst Weigelt, *J. K. Lavater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1991), 74. On Lavater's relationship with pietism, see idem, *Lavater und die Stillen im Lande: Distanz und Nähe* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1988), 30.

20. See John Graham, *Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1979), 47.

21. Herder, *Werke*, 4:240. This concept would have been known to Lavater at the time he was working on the *Fragmente*, but not when he published the *Aussichten* (1768–78) or *Von der Physiognomik* (1772).