

Der Philosoph ist in diesem Sinne kein einsamer „Bildhauer“ mehr, sondern ein Mitgestalter seines Zeitalters.

SUMMARY

*Johann Georg Hamann's Studies in
Cameratism and Johann Christoph Berens'
Vision of Riga: a Utopian Project from
the Second Half of the 18th Century*

Since 19th century, Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) has been seen as a forerunner of *Sturm und Drang* and Romanticism. He was engaged in active dialogue with Immanuel Kant and a mentor of Johann Gottfried Herder whose thinking he apparently enriched. From the point of view of Baltic intellectual history, it is worth noting that Hamann's own work in his early phase in the 1750s is tightly connected with the manor Grünhof in Kurland. Here, he wrote down the bulwark of papers that have been preserved from this early period.

Any interpretation of this large amount of text has to take into account the complicated relationship between Hamann and Johann Christoph Berens, a member of the Riga magistrate, who at that time intended to make his city a player in the international arena with a special status. Against the background of the conflict between Prussia, Russia and England over their respective spheres of influence in the Baltic Sea area, Berens envisioned Riga as a political mediator between these powers. To elaborate this special status for Riga more thoroughly, Berens searched for someone who would be able to both formulate the theoretical foundation of his vision and give a political justification for Riga's neutrality in terms of international trade. His choice fell on Hamann, with whom he had kept contact since their studies at Königsberg University.

As a result of this task assigned to him by Berens, Hamann had been preoccupied with detailed studies of cameralism since 1756. Typical for him, however, was a sort of philosophical transgression into utopia that left pragmatical solutions, e.g. concerning Berens' vision for a Riga as a "Republic of Trade", way behind. According to Hamann, historical events and actions gain meaning first and foremost through the imagination of an ideal civic model of the future. Historical research, in this sense, should assess the past and the present within the perspective of the future.

In 1757, Hamann was sent by Berens to London in order to start working in the direction of the great autonomy project, the latter envisioned for

Riga. However, Hamann's activities in diplomatic circles did not lead to any result and he fell into depression. At that point, he found inspiration in the Bible and turned his thinking to God. This "London experience" is usually interpreted as a radical turning point, changing Hamann's entire future philosophical thinking. And indeed, he did not continue working on his studies in cameralism after he returned to Riga. His conceptual designs from Grünhof, however, remain important since here Hamann formulated a claim to change his century with an utopian vision much like Plato in his *Republic* or Heidegger in the early 1930s.