

Lessing and the German Enlightenment

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Primarily celebrated for his dramatic works *Minna von Barnhelm*, *Emilia Galotti* and *Nathan der Weise*, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's diverse pursuits extended far beyond the stage. From incisive journalism to innovative reflections on poetry, aesthetics and theology, his wide-ranging intellectual interests place him firmly alongside contemporary polymaths such as Diderot. In this extensive study an international team of experts explores Lessing's contribution to both the German and broader European Enlightenments to reveal:

- the energy and acuity of his critical writing, which made him an exemplar for subsequent German authors;
- the originality and lasting significance of *Laocoon*, his groundbreaking treatise on aesthetics, which distinguished the domains of poetry and the visual arts, and is still a major point of reference;
- how his reflections on theology and the Bible helped shape a view of Christianity as a historical phenomenon without absolute truth;
- how his Enlightenment curiosity and open-mindedness were nourished by an interest in natural science, particularly astronomy;
- how activities such as his adaptation of English domestic tragedy and his translations of Diderot's theatrical writings placed him at the heart of the pan-European Enlightenment.

Ritchie Robertson, Preface

Note on references

H. B. Nisbet, Lessing's achievement

Romira Worvill, Lessing and the French Enlightenment

Alexander Košenina and Ritchie Robertson, Lessing as journalist and controversialist

Richard E. Schade, Lessing's poetry

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David Hill, Enlightenment as a historical process: *Ernst und Falk* and *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*

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Karl S. Guthke, Lessing and science

A chronology of the life and major works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing

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List of contributors

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Collaborators:

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Eighteenth-century studies

For both students and scholars, this volume offers an informative and up-to-date overview of the most essential research topics in this area and poses questions that open up opportunities for further research and development.
