

Memorial Address for William Motherby¹

The author of this memorial address, **August Hagen** (1797-1880), was the youngest son of a close friend and colleague of Immanuel Kant's. Born Ernst August Hagen, he grew up to be an art historian and held a professorship in art and literary history at the university in Königsberg, also serving as co-editor of the *Neue Preußische Provinzial-Blätter*, in whose pages this memorial address for Motherby was published (1847, vol. 3, pp. 131-44).

August's father, **Karl Gottfried Hagen** (1749-1829), lectured on experimental chemistry, botany, and pharmacy at the university in Königsberg (from 1775, becoming a full professor of medicine in 1788) as well as running the family pharmacy business. He was a regular dinner guest of Kant's and one of his sources for news of scientific developments, especially in chemistry. He and his wife (Johanna Maria Rabe, 1764-1829) had nine children, five of whom lived to adulthood: Karl Heinrich (1785-1856; since 1811 the professor of political science at Königsberg, and a former student of both Immanuel Kant and Christian Jacob Kraus), Johann Friedrich (1788-1865; assumed the family pharmacy in 1816), August (1797-1880), Johanna (married the astronomer F. W. Bessel), and Louise Florentine (married F. E. Neumann, who assumed her father's vacated professorship of physics and mineralogy). This was a family of considerable and wide-ranging talent.

William Motherby (12 Sep 1776-16 Jan 1847), more than twenty years older than August Hagen, was one of the younger members of Kant's circle of dinner friends and he helped found the "Friends of Kant" society that gathered to celebrate Kant's life each year on his birthday, in his former home on Prinzessinstraße that had since been turned into an inn. William was one of nine surviving children of Robert Motherby and Charlotte (Toussaint) Motherby, all of whom grew up with Kant visiting their home each Sunday for dinner. William eventually attended Kant's lectures in the early 1790s before leaving for Edinburgh to complete his medical studies, and then returned to Königsberg in 1799 to practice medicine.

– Edited and translated by Steve Naragon²

Just five weeks ago my hand last rested in his, his eyes regarded me benevolently, his speech (he had spoken with such touching kindness of his parents) [132] seized and stirred me. His hand whose grasp

¹ **Hagen notes:** "On the anniversary of the Royal German Society on January 18, new members who had joined in the past year were named in an introductory report, as were those who had passed away. The last among these was the highly esteemed and universally loved Dr. William Motherby. The present secretary took the opportunity to share a sketch of his life that began with the following words: 'Without feeling remotely qualified to pass judgment on his knowledge and work, or his life and thought, I ask to be granted the privilege of recounting what I mostly observed or heard at a distance, recounting with a melancholy heart and excited by memories that do not illuminate individual peaks so much as merge into a colorful play of lights crowning his head with a special halo. Given the shortness of time, there can be no question of ordering and sifting the material. No portrait can emerge from these individual lines; it is too difficult to **sketch him**, since he was not a man who sat still, and his movement offers not one, but a thousand views, with his features modeled by that prevailing genius, like water reflecting the sky in different colors, the play of the west wind and unleashing of the storm that ripples and stirs to waves and yet which never denies the spirit of God hovering over it all.' Encouraged by several listeners to publish the speech, the author has changed a few inaccurate or inappropriate parts and added a few parts that had been omitted, hoping such minor but necessary re-workings of the speech will not lessen the warmth that the moment demands."

² **A note on the translation:** I have broken-up a few of the longer sentences and paragraphs of the original for greater readability. Emphases in the original (proper names, for the most part) have been set in bold-face. As for the explanatory notes: Hagen's few notes are clearly indicated as his; the remainder briefly identify individuals or events mentioned in the text, normally following the rule that the more widely an individual or event is known, the briefer the note.

once bore the certainty of unshakeable friendship has now grown cold. Motherby had no enemies, for he could not hate. And to his friends he was complete: any suspicion or doubt ever to arise against them was dismissed either with an indifference contemptuous of all scrutiny, or with an inward indignation, for he built his good opinion on solid ground. His eye is now dimmed whose gaze once fell with such ardor on all that surrounded him, illuminating the least significant with a grateful perspective; an eye that **Garrick**³ would have envied for presenting Shakespearean characters in all their peculiar significance. His speech is now silenced, that once living spring streaming an uninterrupted flow of melody, with the choicest expressions, the purest pronunciation, and nowhere slowed for lack of an apt phrase or the opposition of a questionable point. A frankness beyond all fear or blame, recognizing what is competent, tearing down what cannot stand, the highest love of truth that even in seemingly unbridled jesting observed a serious limit, the harmlessness spreading over all from a noble direction that kept its distance with a calculated restraint – this was the core of his social gifts that bound every ear to his voice. And on top of that, his witty and always independent grasp of the most diverse things, his descriptive gift that with a focused light could bring the distant near for all to see, and his effervescent humor that found no end of images, allusions, and catchwords, the entire community of Hoffmann's *Serapion Brothers*⁴ all united in his one person – only with the difference that the former's starting point for each work was the same, while with the latter, there was no prevailing intention and the liveliness of the mood brought on bursts of wit, where each spark landing by chance ignited a new bonfire.

William Motherby was born in Königsberg on 9 December 1776. His father was an English man, his mother, **Charlotte Toussaint**, was a French woman, and he [133] was completely English, but for that reason no less German – for as we say with **Tieck**, “**Shakespeare** and his better contemporaries are also German, but neither then nor now was the German ever French, and so on,”⁵ and in his noble veins there pulsed a French liveliness. The conflict of combining these different elements in him showed itself in several ways. His unguarded opinion that seemed to hide nothing from the world, sometimes wrapped itself in the mysterious cloak of the *incognito* and his calm clarity would become a meaning-filled *chiaroscuro*. The evil spirit ruling over his fate was neither **Hoffmann's** caricature of the devil that tears at and mocks ideal figures, nor **Heine's** inner strife that strips away each color in a destructive rage to show the coarse fatigues [*Drillich*] bearing the magical artistic image; his was rather a poetic superabundance that, for all its reverence for everyday life, transcended its regular monotony. He was already haunted by the peculiarity of his ancestors' history, one of whom was supposedly the masked protagonist next to **Charles I** on that bloody stage, who as judge pronounced the final sentence.

His father came to Königsberg as an eighteen-year-old youth, summoned from England by the merchant **Green, Kant's friend**.⁶ **Green**, who liked his hermit's life more and more, and in his later years

³ [Garrick] David Garrick (1717-1779), the famous London actor and man of the theater.

⁴ [Hoffmann's Serapion brothers] E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776-1822) also grew up in Königsberg and was the same age as William Motherby, although they attended different schools. Hoffmann's published writings include a four volume set of stories collectively known as *Die Serapionsbrüder*.

⁵ [Tieck ... German French, and so on] The poet and playwright Johann Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) edited A. W. Schlegel's translations of Shakespeare.

⁶ [Green, Kant's friend] Joseph Green (1727-1786) was an English merchant from Hull who emigrated to Königsberg around 1750 and established a trading company that was successful enough for him to employ an assistant. He was already acquainted with the younger Robert Motherby (1736-1801), who arrived in Königsberg around 1755 – or 1751, according to Reicke [AA 13: 78].

preferred reading English books about new inventions and voyages of discovery over his lucrative business commissions, wrote to **Hull**, his birthplace, and asked a business friend to recommend a young man with a strong sense of duty to work as his assistant – for a year, perhaps, after which they could decide the next steps. **Robert Motherby** arrived knowing not a word of German and so was dependent entirely on his employer, whom he understood so much better. Blessed with the utmost conscientiousness, **Motherby** learned German in order to discover every advantage for his master on the stock exchange, and he roamed the city in the interest of commerce alone. Years passed before he allowed himself any pleasure, [134] which consisted of taking walks outside the city gates to enjoy the sights of the vast meadows. These are a pleasant feature of our hometown and I know many a stranger to have gazed with pleasure upon them; even natives speak approvingly of them – **Hippel**, for instance, compared the meadows behind the Dutch boom⁷ to a billiard table. This feeling for nature passed from father to son, and William was not at all lonely when he left the hustle and bustle of the city for the countryside after giving up his medical practice and leaving his friends and the many who sought him out.

Robert Motherby, the father, through his industry and prudence, brought **Green's** business into a greater prosperity than it had hitherto seen. The servant soon became the master's friend and finally his heir, carrying on the business with great success. He bestowed upon his children a thoroughly free-thinking education that, however, offered no leniency whenever it was necessary to subordinate pleasure to duty. The obedience paid to him was combined with a loving reverence, for they saw how he spared no sacrifice in furthering their own best interests. William, the third of five sons, had once won his father's special praise through his diligence and obedience, and as a reward was permitted to spend a few days hiking to **Pillau** with his friend **Leo**. The travelers were directed to ship captains who, out of old devotion, did all they could to provide a pleasant experience for the guests, even offering them passage to **Danzig**. **Leo** was apprehensive about extending their trip, but **Motherby** thought the opportunity so favorable as to hardly warrant asking for permission. But letters were sent home, and while **Leo** received his parent's consent, **Motherby** was given strict instructions to return home immediately – so he tied up his bundle and left without a murmur. His father received him at first rather coldly, but after finding no hint of displeasure in his son's face, softened to his former kindness and sent the son to Lithuania for a short pleasure trip. Thus the son's firmness was tested early, as was his training in self-control, and thanks to this he was never [135] challenged by what one calls moods [*Launen*]; he could be cheerful even when his heart was weeping, cheerful even under the horrible pains that more than once brought him to the edge of death.

The father provided opportunities for his nine children to acquire knowledge of all sorts, and from an early age they all spoke German, French, and English fluently. Each of the sons had to spend some time in England. One of them was interested in the country houses he saw on his travels there and so his father, who liked to give every inclination a rewarding target, had the *Charlottenberg Inn* (actually

⁷ [Hippel ... Dutch boom] The Dutch boom (*Holländer Baum*) was a removable barrier to regulate boat traffic on the Pregel, placed at the western edge of the city across from the Friedrichsburg Fortress. A second boom, the *Litauer*, was located upstream from the city on the New Pregel. Theodor Gottlieb **Hippel** (1741-1796) lived near the Dutch boom for a year as a live-in tutor; he was a former student of Kant and Kraus and later lived a double life, as a devoted public servant and eventually mayor of Königsberg, and as the anonymous author of several novels and plays and even a book on marriage.

Charlottenhill) built near Juditten.⁸ The wife, who had been afflicted with many pregnancies, was to spend her summers in God's open air here on her own little estate, for she had received a small inheritance and he said it was quite reasonable to use this for her own good. He saw that the inherited 6000 Thlr. covered only a very small part of the building costs, but sold it for even less when his wife – whom he loved so well – died after just half a year staying there. William also acquired from his father this decisive way of thinking, this electric [*elektrische*] drive to allow some developing thought to be actualized immediately, whatever the losses and inconveniences – as though it was some inspiration from the Holy Spirit and thus a sin not to pursue directly. Any calm reasoner would have found ample opportunity to think this reckless and eccentric.

The Philanthropinum was flourishing in **Dessau**. A spirit for knowledge and art had been stimulated here by a prince of whom the republican-minded **Winckelmann** spoke with enthusiastic praise, namely, **Leopold Friedrich Franz von Anhalt**.⁹ A spiritualization of science through art made itself felt here. August Rode provided the reading public various classics in a pithy German and, as a brother of two artists, translated Vitruvius; the master builder Erdmannsdorf studied in Italy and opened up to the translator a proper understanding of the subject. Kolbe modeled the German language and prepared engravings of landscapes. The Olivier brothers [136] who helped found Romantic painting, and the famous Krüger in Berlin, all were Dessauers,¹⁰ and they laid the foundation for their disciplinary education in their hometown. **Robert Motherby** considered his son **William** the most capable and so sent him to Dessau to study at the Philanthropinum.¹¹ Here he became Basedow's pupil and, if the original poetic

⁸ [Charlottenberg ... Juditten] Hagen is presumably making a small joke here with 'Charlottenhill'. Juditten was a small village about 10 km west of Königsberg, and the official map prepared by von Schrötter in 1803 shows a house on the north side called *Charlottenberg*.

⁹ [Philanthropinum ... Leopold Friedrich Franz von Anhalt] The **Philanthropinum** was based in part on the pedagogical principles elaborated in Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) and further developed by Johann Bernhard Basedow (1724-1790), who opened the school in Dessau in December 1774. While it closed its doors in 1793, it made a lasting contribution to school reform in Prussia and elsewhere, and Kant was an ardent supporter, helping to locate pupils and teachers alike. Kant wrote (28 March 1776) to the director of the Philanthropinum, Christian Heinrich Wolke (1741-1825), on behalf of Robert Motherby to indicate his interest to enroll his oldest son, George, "who would be 6 years old this August 7" [AA 10: 191-94]; a follow up letter to Basedow (19 June 1776) confirms that Robert would be bringing his son to the school [AA 10: 194-95]. It was at this same time that Kant published two short notices supporting the Philanthropinum in 1776 and 1777 [AA 2: 447-52]. **Leopold III**, Friedrich Franz of Anhalt-Dessau (1740-1817) was the enlightened local prince who supported Basedow's pedagogical reforms. Johann Joachim **Winckelmann** (1717-1768) developed a new aesthetic understanding of ancient Greek and Roman art and architecture, with his *History of Ancient Art* (1764) capturing the imagination of the generation following him.

¹⁰ [August Rode ... Dessauers] August von **Rode** (1751-1837) published translations into German of, among other things, Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* (1783) and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1794), as well as Vitruvius's *Architecture* (1796), and he wrote a biography of Friedrich Wilhelm von Erdmannsdorff (1801). Carl Wilhelm **Kolbe** (1759-1835) published several books on "linguistic purity" and the German language, as well as teaching art at the school. There were three **Olivier** brothers from Dessau, all of whom attended the Philanthropinum and studied art under Kolbe – Heinrich (1783-1848), Johann Heinrich Ferdinand (1785-1841), and Woldemar Friedrich (1791-1859) – and they all made names for themselves as artists. Franz **Krüger** (1797-1857) also studied art with Kolbe, continuing his studies in Berlin where he developed a reputation as a portraitist and eventually served as a professor at the Academy of Arts.

¹¹ [Philanthropinum] This suggests that William alone studied at the Philanthropinum, but we know that George enrolled in 1796 – see Kant's 28 March 1776 letter to Wolke [AA 10: 191-94] and 19 June 1776 letter Basedow [AA 10: 194-95]). Presumably his brother Joseph also attended.

nature and mildness of his judgment were not innate in him already, then they were instilled in him there. However much he stood above his dinner companions in terms of knowledge and the skillful exposition of his claims, he never was insulting, and those for whom his explanations could not instruct at least were not hurt by his contradicting them.

Motherby was still very young when he began at the university in Königsberg to study medicine.¹² His zeal combined with his very small stature attracted special attention. Once in a rush to reach a lecture hall in time, he ran onto a bridge without noticing the yoke [*Joch*] had already been raised. With no time to go back – as he told the story – only a luckily executed somersault saved him from harm. Needless to say the bridges must have been constructed differently then.¹³ But he also did not shy away from the *studiosa juvenitas* spirit of resistance. A much protested dog tax had been imposed and each dog owner was now required to buy a dog collar (a so-called ‘free sign’) bearing the letters **I. F.**, which stood for “**is free**.” As a joke, he began a petition to the magistrate on behalf of many students in which he reviewed the legal saying “the dog is free,” with a clear reference to the fact that the magistrate at the time was the later war-councilor F.¹⁴ Among Motherby's teachers were **Kant**, who had a favorable opinion of him from **Green**'s time, and the medical-councilor **Hagen**,¹⁵ who remained close to him until his death. When the first occasional poem [*Carmen*] was presented to Kant by his students, Motherby was the chosen speaker. Just as old were his now long-deceased friends, the bookseller and banker [137] **Nicolovius**, Dr. **Jachmann**, the owner of the Trutenau paper mill, and the commerce-councilor and landowner **Schwinck**.¹⁶ **Motherby** received his medical doctorate in Edinburgh in 1797. He introduced cowpox vaccination in Königsberg with serum brought back from Edinburgh, and in recognition of this achievement became director of an institute providing serum to all the physicians in the province. He also found the insane asylum in a state that merely increased the savagery and dehumanization, with barbarism and

¹² [study medicine] Motherby was still fifteen when he matriculated at the university on 8 March 1792: “Motherby William, Regiomontan. Boruss., mercatoris Angli filius, med.” [Erler 1911, 2: 618].

¹³ [yoke had already been raised ... constructed differently then] This text is problematic, since a *Jochbrücke* or pile-bridge does not have moving parts. Gause reports that “the Krämer- and Schmiedebrücke [the two bridges on the north side of the Kneiphof island] were rebuilt in 1787, from pile-bridges to draw-bridges” [Gause 1996, 2: 172]. Motherby was not attending university classes until 1792, but there was also no indication in the story which bridge was intended. Hagen's closing comment suggests that the entire matter was a jest.

¹⁴ [war-councilor F.] The government official behind this dog tax appears to have been Johann Gottfried Frey (1762-1831) – thus the play on his name: “Der Hund ist Frey.” Frey was a life-long resident of Königsberg who had studied law at the university and was strongly influenced by both Kant and Kraus. He began his career in 1785 in local government and soon belonged to Kant's circle of dinner guests, where Motherby would certainly have been in close social interaction with him, although perhaps not at the time of this incident.

¹⁵ [medical-councilor Hagen] This was the author's father: Karl Gottfried Hagen (1749-1829).

¹⁶ [Nicolovius ... Schwinck] Friedrich **Nicolovius** (1768-1836) was born in Königsberg and attended the *Collegium Fridericianum* and the university before apprenticing at Hartknoch's printshop in Riga, returning to Königsberg in 1790, where he published many Königsberg authors. Johannes Benjamin **Jachmann** (1765-1832), along with his younger brother Reinhold Bernhard, grew up in Königsberg and attended the university and Kant's lectures, and spent several years serving as his amanuensis. The older brother, Johannes, studied medicine, finishing this with travels through England, Scotland, and France, before returning to Königsberg in 1791 to set up his medical practice. He married the daughter of a bookseller in 1794, and it was through her that he ended up inheriting the paper mill in Trutenau (about 20 km north of Königsberg), where he moved in 1801. Königsberg's merchant family **Schwinck** began with Georg Friedrich Schwinck, who moved there from Ulm. By the time his son – also Georg Friedrich (†1756) – was managing the firm, it was among the leading businesses of the city.

carelessness joining hands here. The sexes were not kept separate and eventually a child was born to two of the patients. **Motherby** strove to re-organize the asylum along more appropriate lines, something finally achieved by the medical-councilor **Unger**.¹⁷

Motherby soon joined the ranks of popular physicians in Königsberg. His abrupt manner did not make him suitable for everyone – for instance, he would interrupt patients before they were done describing their complaints and encourage them to do better – but those who sought his help and advice were completely satisfied and trusted him down to their last breath. His appearance at one's door was always cause for celebration, not just for the patient but the entire house, and his devoted participation in all the patient's events, his good humor, his certainty and presence of mind in recognizing the problem, ensures that he will be remembered with gratitude by many. Although **Scheffner** was well known as a friend of his father's, as an elderly man he made a rare exception by turning to a younger doctor. Motherby enjoyed significant achievements in ophthalmology. **Kant** gave much credit to his solid knowledge and provided him a gratifying testimonial in a 1799 letter to **Sömmering**: while thanking the author for sending him a copy of his *Tabula embryonum humanorum*,¹⁸ Kant wrote the following: "I gave it as a gift to my dear and thoroughly learned friend Dr. Motherby, who was awarded the degree of *Doctor Medicinae* in England and is now practicing with great acclaim in Königsberg, and whose opinion I consult as often as I can when evaluating your ideas."

[138] **Motherby** also concerned himself with natural history, but for the most part only when it connected with his medical practice. His desire to protect people from harm gave him the idea to distribute accurate illustrations of the local poisonous plants, and of writing a history of rabies in dogs, indicating how to prevent the animals from becoming rabid. At the time, Bessel had just been bitten by a hunting dog that was likely rabid.¹⁹

He unfortunately did not always have time to finish all that he had with such ardent zeal begun.

Motherby was among the last to despair of Prussia's fate during the unhappy war years, and was still entertaining hope when the Prussian armies, to use his expression, were fighting like lions with desperate resistance on the fields of Prussian Eylau.²⁰ He was among the first in those days to raise himself by force of intellect above the outside forces. While important university institutions were being established – the

¹⁷ [Unger] A new associate professorship of surgery was created in 1814 to attract Carl **Unger** (1782-1835) to Königsberg, where he set up the first surgical and polyclinic on the Butterberg, on the west side of town near the botanical gardens [Gause 1996, 2: 347].

¹⁸ [*Tabula embryonum humanorum*] Samuel Thomas **Sömmering**, *Tabula embryonum humanorum* (Frankfurt 1788). Soemmerring (1755-1830), the leading neuroanatomist of his day, corresponded briefly with Kant in the 1790's, and he included an afterword by Kant in his *Über das Organ der Seele* (Königsberg 1796) – Kant's afterword is printed in his correspondence [AA 12: 30-35]. A draft of Kant's letter that Hagen apparently quotes here is dated 4 August 1800 and refers to Soemmerring's letter of 3 May 1800 (not extant), printed at AA 12: 320, except that the Soemmerring text mentioned in the draft is his *Icones embryonum humanorum* (Frankfurt/Main 1799). It isn't clear how Hagen came upon this letter.

¹⁹ [Bessel ... rabid] Bessel was bit on 15 January 1818 and his letter to Wilhelm Olbers of 25 January 1818 describes the incident and treatment of the bite wound in detail [Erman 1852, 2: 73-75]. William Motherby and Professor Unger handled the case. A later dissection of the dog found no evidence of rabies.

²⁰ [Prussia's fate ... Eylau] The Battle of Eylau (7-8 February 1807) was between Napoleon's *Grande Armée* and the Imperial Russian Army, with a Prussian corps arriving late in the battle. Despite some 30-50 thousand dead and wounded, the battle was inconclusive, as the Russians managed a successful retreat. Prussia-Eylau (now: Bagrationovsk, Russia) lies about 44 km south of Königsberg. William Motherby's youngest brother, John (1784-1813), would die six years later at the Battle of Leipzig.

botanical garden, the observatory, etc. – and minds constrained by the omnipotence of foreign rule were indulging in their ideas, he nurtured young seedlings that sprouted from the rotten edifice of the scholarly aristocracy and the caste spirit of the civil servants. The leading men of the Prussian state were employed or were staying in Königsberg for an extended period of time, and Motherby was on friendly terms with Wilhelm von Humboldt, von Stein, von Stägemann. He interacted with von Schön, Bessel, with the state-councillor [139] Nicolovius, and Hüllmann.²¹

A new city administration was installed and, on behalf of the city, Motherby thanked the outgoing city-president Gervais²² for his service – the last to hold with dignity an office given such prestige by von Hippel. Merchant Deetz was elected mayor,²³ and Motherby and the bookseller Nicolovius were among the first city-councilors. He and like-minded colleagues arranged things to too high a standard, however, and the restrictions that were later found necessary struck him as petty constraints on his bold aspirations for the citizenry. Introducing Pestalozzi's ideas into the schools interested Motherby as well as councilors Nicolovius and Busolt, and he read *Lienhard and Gertrud* with delight.²⁴ There were no lack of missteps, given the many efforts to raise the general level of education, and unfortunate experiences stifled the zeal through self-induced ingratitude.

Motherby had more to complain about at home than just bitter appearances. Drawn to the unusual he often did not choose the best, not even when forming his own household. A series of martyrdoms came from this and he felt the sufferings of hell all the more acutely since his own guilt went beyond his poor

²¹ [von Humboldt ... Hüllmann] Wilhelm von **Humboldt** (1767-1835) arrived in Königsberg in April 1809 and was a frequent guest at the Motherby's, developing an exceptionally close relationship with Johanna that resulted in a "passionate correspondence" over the next four years (Meisner, as qtd. in Motherby 2016). Heinrich Friedrich Karl Reichsfreiherr vom und zum **Stein** (1757-1831) – Baron von Stein, for short – was a leading force for Enlightened reform in Prussia, made possible by Napoleon's earlier dismantling of the Prussian state. Stein stayed in police-director Frey's house while visiting Königsberg in 1808, and had otherwise spent time in the city in 1781 and 1805 [Gause 1996, 2: 526; Albinus 1985, 88; Hubatsch 1981]. Friedrich August von **Stägemann** (1763-1840), a Berliner, lived in Königsberg from 1784-1810, before returning to Berlin; he and his wife Elisabeth were part of Kant's circle of friends. Theodor von **Schön** (1773-1856) studied under Kant and Kraus at Königsberg and served as president of West Prussia and then East Prussia, and after they were united until he retired in 1842. Friedrich Wilhelm **Bessel** (1784-1846) was apprenticed to a shipping business but developed an interest in astronomy and was essentially self-taught, without university training, and after working at various observatories was appointed to direct the new university observatory in Königsberg in 1810, and in October 1812 he married August Hagen's older sister, Johanna (1794-1885). Government-Councilor Georg Heinrich Ludwig **Nicolovius** (1767-1839) was an older brother to Friedrich, the publisher (see the note, above). 'Hüllmann' likely refers to Karl Dietrich **Hüllmann** (1765-1846) who assumed a professorship in history and statistics at the university in Königsberg (1808) until accepting a position at the newly established university in Bonn (1818).

²² [Gervais] Upon Hippel's death on 23 April 1796, the *Kriegs- und Domänenrat* Bernhard Ludwig Konrad Gervais (1754-1821) was appointed as first mayor (*Oberbürgermeister*) of Königsberg. This was a royal appointment, by the King (Friedrich Wilhelm III), and Gervais was the last to receive the office in this fashion [Gause 1996, 2: 178; Straubel 2009, 307].

²³ [Merchant Deetz was elected mayor] In 1809 Martin Gottlieb Deetz (1769-1842) became the first elected mayor (*Oberbürgermeister*) of Königsberg, although he felt himself too young for the position and resigned the post the following March [Albinus 1985, 60; Gause 1996, 2: 188, 337-38].

²⁴ [*Lienhard and Gertrud*] Pestalozzi's fame was established with the publication of his novel *Lienhard and Gertrud*, 4 vols. 1781-87.

choice and the recklessness with which he trusted his domestic friends. The divorce papers,²⁵ drawn up only in 1824, are said to concern a long period of time. Much misfortune weighed on Motherby's family. His brother, the government-councilor, fell during the storming of Leipzig as an officer of the East Prussian Landwehr;²⁶ a second brother took his own life and perhaps also a third. One sister, happily married, died during childbirth and a second mourned, as a young widow, her fine husband. But with rare self-mastery that dictated that when nothing could be done to help, one must not impotently look to the past but rather trust confidently in the future, there were only a few moments when Motherby gave despondency the upper hand. He laid out the garden surrounding his home with the greatest taste – this now belongs to the *Three Crowns Lodge*²⁷ – and he managed to introduce swans to the castle pond. He related stories in such a delightful manner that one could only infer an enviable childlike cheerfulness prevailing in the Motherby home. For instance, he once reported drumming together all his people, all his fellow residents, to watch a play in the parlor. While counting money, a five shilling piece rolled on the floor which he found not lying but rather standing on its edge. He highly valued a present he was given, a thermometer in the form of a pocket watch. But in the midst of this happy circle of friends, he could not help dipping the thermometer into the bowl of punch to check its temperature. It did poorly in the warm bath and only with difficulty was the damage [140] repaired, but he could not resist the temptation to repeat the experiment, thereby causing himself the embarrassment of admitting his folly to the one person able to cure the trouble.

He also kept up his scientific activities on the side and through these lessened the anger and pain that he more or less kept hidden from others. He continued his diligent reading of Horace and Kant, the man in whose memory he founded the Kant Society and that meets for a luncheon each year on his birthday. This deeply penetrating connoisseur of Shakespeare's greatness translated the *Merry Wives of Windsor*²⁸ with a mastery not sufficiently appreciated. Especially striking in the comedy is the Frenchman who stumbles over foreign idioms. The last act, fluttering with gossamer poetry, is less successful, with the verses stumbling rather more than the translator intended. **Motherby** was entirely fluent in three languages and learned other languages with ease. He regularly attended lectures by government-councilor

²⁵ [divorce papers] Hagen's elliptical discussion of Motherby's divorce was either out of tact or because it was already so well known. William married Johanna Tillheim (or Thielheim; 1783-1842), about seven years his junior, in 1806, and they quickly had two children: Anna, whom they called Nancy (1807) and Robert (1808). The Motherby home hosted various visiting intellectuals and Johanna developed close attachments to two of them: Wilhelm von Humboldt followed by Ernst Moritz Arndt. With William consumed by his work and Johanna entertaining guests, it is not surprising that their own relationship suffered, but it was a student studying medicine in Königsberg – Johann Friedrich Dieffenbach (1792-1847) – that caught her heart entirely, and this is likely the “domestic friend” in whom Motherby placed too much trust. Dieffenbach left Königsberg (1820), graduated with a medical degree from Würzburg (1822), and by July 1823 had begun a practice in Berlin. William and Johanna divorced in 1824 and Johanna left for Berlin and married Dieffenbach. That marriage also ended in divorce nine years later, but Johanna remained in Berlin and ran a salon; see Meisner [1893, 1-36] and Motherby [2016].

²⁶ [His brother ... Landwehr] This was the youngest brother, John Motherby (1784-1813).

²⁷ [*Three Crowns Lodge*] Founded in June 1760, the *Drei Kronenloge* was the largest of the three masonic lodges in Königsberg (the other two were “Zum Totenkopf” and “Zum Phönix,” which combined in 1832). The *Drei Kronenloge* acquired a new building in 1818 that was on the Motherby grounds at Modestengasse 1, on the west side of the castle pond [Albinus 1985, 204; Gerlach 2009, 241].

²⁸ [*Merry Wives of Windsor*] **Hagen notes:** “The piece appeared anonymously, ‘new and accurately translated,’ Königsberg 1826.”

Graff²⁹ on Old German and was himself inspired to study comparative linguistics, with his etymological researches recognized by scholars, however bold they often seemed.

Motherby suffered an especially hard blow before the divorce took place. He had given some capital, the largest part of his fortune, to his aforementioned childhood friend, the bank director.³⁰ After he disappeared, the money was not entirely gone, since it was guaranteed by the Arnsberg estate. At that time, in 1822, the estates were selling for extremely low prices, and though Motherby wanted sell it to get back some of his money, an experienced landowner urged him to keep the estate. He planned to continue his medical practice only until he could hand it over to his son, just as medical-councilor **Hirsch** and court-councilor **Cruse** had done before him. This [141] did not happen for another ten years, but from that time on – unfortunately! – his medical knowledge was devoted only to his own fluctuating health conditions. He ordered instruments from all over and altered them in various ways to make his suffering more bearable, which he had no hope of removing altogether.

Motherby left **Königsberg** in 1832 and farmed **Arnsberg**³¹ initially under quite unfavorable conditions, but eventually with great success. As a landowner, **Motherby** also hunted, and in terms of the art of hunting he was the equal to his predecessors in his tireless pursuit. In the hunting painting venerated by friends of General von **Natzmer** we find among the portraits also **Motherby**, next to **Bessel** and holding the bagged fox in his hand, probably only to demonstrate, in the manner of hunting enthusiasts, the likely course of the bullet.

The Association for the Promotion of Agriculture in Prussia, proposed by land-councilor von **Bardeleben**,³² was brought into being by Motherby and flourished while he was the director. The reports of his observations during a trip to England inspired many farmers to abandon their old ways and improve the carrying capacity of the soil in order to better satisfy the growing demand. He scolded the rashness of the country people who wasted what was useful, vividly depicting how in other countries the salt³³ of the earth was collected as a treasure. He thought it absurd that horses, which eat the purest food – not just cast-off mares, but stately animals – if they suffer a damaged foot, as often happens, are abandoned to the knacker's yard rather than used for food. To combat this prejudice he gathered together a number of horse

²⁹ [Graff] Eberhard Gottlieb Graff (1780-1841) studied at the university in Königsberg, returned to his birth-city of Elbing to teach at the gymnasium until 1824, then accepted a professorship in the German language back in Königsberg.

³⁰ [the bank director] This was Karl Ludwig Leo, the one who hiked with Motherby to Pillau. His embezzlement harmed more individuals than just Motherby, who was fortunate to the extent that the Arnsberg estate was attached to his investment as collateral, which is how he came to own it in 1822. Leo had married Maria Reichardt, a sister to Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752-1814), the composer and former student of Kant's. See Gause [1996, 2: 449].

³¹ [Arnsberg] The town of Arnsberg was south of Königsberg and is now called *Pobeda* (Russia). It was founded by Kaspar von Nostiz (1541), to whom Motherby would later dedicate a plaque in honor of his efforts with carp breeding (see below).

³² [Bardeleben] This is presumably *Landrat* Carl Ludwig von Bardeleben (1722-1787) [Straubel 2009, 41].

³³ [salt] The German *Salz* here is not to be understood in terms of "table salt" or sodium chloride, but in the older sense of nitrates, sulphates, and carbonates, many of which are useful fertilizers for increasing crop yield.

eaters [*Hippophagen*] and wrote a paper³⁴ that began with a facetious derivation of two words, namely, virtue is to **do** good [*Tugend ... thun*] and vice is to **leave** good [*Laster ... lassen*].

He gained respect for the Association through his [142] widespread correspondence and was not deterred from making or proposing experiments. Sums of money, thousands of thalers, were spent on the purchase of fruits and cattle: if Whittington wheat was not successful, then he would try the Probsteier, if the Ayreshir cattle did not appear suitable for the land, then he would try the Oldenburg. Motherby's agricultural essays were read with benefit and his fine remarks appeared everywhere, be they about something major or minor in agriculture: he found that bones were an excellent fertilizer for bindweed and he was gratified to see how its roots grew a long way in order to work through the hollowed bone; he exacted admiration for the splendor of rapeseed, which he triumphantly showed to his friends, noting how it could grow on barren soil. No one was a worthier head of an association than he, recognizing the merit of each and wanting to learn from each, comparing the former with the new and weighing them against each other. – Near the end he also felt compelled to erect a memorial plaque to Chancellor **Kaspar von Nostiz** in the church of **Kreuzburg**, whom he considered, according to old information, the first carp breeder in Prussia, and in fact on his own **Arnsberg** estate. In addition to his agricultural treatises, he also wrote a psychological work: *On Temperament*.³⁵

Setting aside the learned physician and the capable farmer, **Motherby** would still occupy a significant position in the history of Königsberg's culture due to his unsurpassable social talents. Even though **Kant** counted as one of his associates, we still find in the behavior of Kant and his older friends, in their conventionally polite forms and their flattering obligingness, an essence redolent of the hair bag.³⁶ At that time ladies did not partake in learned conversation; they were a second sex that, however eloquent they might be over coffee, would withdraw themselves as too immature as soon as the men began to speak. **Motherby** broke with these ceremonial niceties [143] in a beneficial revival of higher culture; it was he who happily brought to life what **Kant** viewed as the blossoming of the informal tone. If the importance of social life in our hometown is noted these days and the informant does not mention **Motherby**, it is probably only not to offend modesty. His conversation³⁷ testified as much to his thorough and manifold education as to a fortunate innate inclination. He was amiable without flattery, direct without ever being coarse, excited to the highest degree without lapsing into the baroque and tasteless. Never betraying any vanity, neither denying nor flaunting his eloquence, his talk was, to borrow an image used elsewhere, a

³⁴ [a paper] Motherby, *Ueber den Genuß des Pferdefleisches: ein Wort an seine Landsleute*. Königsberg: Gräfe und Unzer, 1841. [22 p.]

³⁵ [*On Temperament*] Motherby, *Die Temperamente. Ein anthropologischer Versuch*. Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1843. [47 p.] Motherby dedicated this essay to “the departed spirit of Immanuel Kant, his unforgettable teacher, in everlasting reverence.”

³⁶ [hair bag] German: *Haarbeutel*. This was the tuft or clump of hair on a wig that hung at the back of the neck and was tied with a ribbon. This was at the height of fashion in Kant's day who, for that reason, wore such a wig.

³⁷ [His conversation] A friend and close contemporary of Motherby's, Christian Friedrich Reusch (1778-1848), published a set of memoirs shortly before his own death and in this same journal. His remarks echo Hagen's:

“William was highly gifted and amiable, with a sparkling and incisive wit. He apparently acquired his fondness for [299] etymology from Kant. His liveliness and quick grasp of all things made him popular in every gathering and often the center of conversation. Hearing William speak so wittily in a group, a distinguished civil servant from another city expressed his greatest appreciation, adding that such entertainment was not on offer where he lived.” [*Neue Preußische Provinzial-Blätter*, 6: 298-99]

fluid environment that touched the subject at every point and conditioned the most varied form. **Motherby** was another **Buttmann**, and like him, he did not lack a **Hirt**³⁸ who smiled at the flood of witty but always good-natured remarks. **Buttmann** could not have been as effective in a city like Berlin as **Motherby** was in Königsberg. From my earliest youth **Motherby** was of consequence in every social gathering and, when he was absent, people complained of its dullness. **Motherby** was such a standard and example of cheerful intercourse that **Hüllmann** and **Bessel** had only to join in without the need to create it first. – Since we have said so much of the pleasures of the table that **Motherby** both enjoyed and seasoned, it should also be noted here that he was exceedingly moderate and drank a glass of wine only for the love of his friends.

During the winter **Motherby** exchanged Arnsberg for Königsberg. Anyone observing this sprightly old man – with his venerable, majestic appearance, his lively eyes that required no glasses, the full white head of hair – would have allowed him, who so often defied death, many more years. His mood seemed so unchanged and full of childishness, amusing himself with two older and highly respected ladies in the evening [144] playing for copper coins at cards and calling himself ‘Prince of the Schillings’ [*Schillingsfürst*] when he won. His letters, also, exuded joy and cheerfulness even in his last days, even when he thought he was good for little else than cannon fodder. He once replied to a correspondent who had mistakenly addressed him as “highborn knight” that he was **not** decorated.

The pain from the stone³⁹ pressed him hard and finally broke him on the morning of January 16 at 10 o'clock. “Joyful in life, he was strong in death.”⁴⁰ He died wholly cogent at the age of 70. His last will and testament designated the little wood he planted in Arnsberg as the final resting place for his body. It was taken there on January 27, perhaps all too quietly; surely a very large number of sincere admirers would have escorted the deceased, at least to the gate, had they known.

Much of what is noble and glorious will go with him to the grave. His memory will not be insured through his literary works, of which there are few. His better self will soon be known only by hearsay, the majesty of his knowledge, the weight of his thought. The Bible says that “we have this treasure in jars of clay.”⁴¹ Might I also apply this saying to this insufficient description of him here. It is an earthen vessel into which I place this treasure. May a friend yet prepare one made of gold!

A. Hagen

³⁸ [Buttmann ... Hirt] Possibly Philipp Karl **Buttmann** (1764-1829), appointed in 1811 as the first librarian of the Royal Library in Berlin, and Aloys **Hirt** (1759-1837), the first professor of archaeology at the newly established university in Berlin. These two interacted, but I can find no mention of a relationship reminiscent of that between Johnson and Boswell.

³⁹ [pain from the stone] Either bladder or kidney stones had plagued Motherby for many years [Motherby 2016].

⁴⁰ [Joyful ... death] **Hagen notes**: “So reported the death notice in the newspaper by his son Dr. R. Motherby, and on behalf of his daughter Nancy Simon, of Cöln.”

⁴¹ [jars of clay] *2 Corinthians* 4:7: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”

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