

# Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century German Philosophers

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## List of Entries Natascha Gruber:

- 1. Abicht, Johann Georg**(1672-1740), Enlightenment Theologian
- 2. Hottinger, Johann Jakob**(1750–1819), Philosoph, Philologist
- 3. Runge, Conrad Heinrich**(1731–92), Philosoph, Philologist
- 4. Salzmann, Friedrich Rudolf**(1749–1821), Writer, Publisher
- 5. Schöpflin, Johann Daniel**(1694-1771), Historian
- 6. Wiegleb, Johann Christian**(1732-1800), Natural Philosopher
- 7. Wyttenbach, Daniel, Senior**(1706-1779), Enlightenment Theologian
- 8. Wyttenbach, Daniel, Junior**(1746-1820), Philosoph, Philologist

## **ABICHT, Johann Georg (1672–1740)**

Johann Georg Abicht was born on 21 March 1672 in Königsee to Johann Michael Abicht, a leather goods trader, and his wife Margaretha Magdalena. He visited school in Rudolfstadt and registered at the University of Jena in 1692 to study Hebrew and theology. After his graduation in 1702 he became Professor for Hebrew at the University of Leipzig. In Leipzig, he also continued his studies and graduated with a doctoral thesis in theology in 1708 and was appointed with a second professorship of theology in 1711. Abicht was fluent in Latin and Hebrew as well as in English and French, and had comprehensive knowledge in philosophy and mathematics. With his outstanding knowledge of the Old Testament and other Judaistic scripts he was regarded as one of the leading Hebrew philologist of his time.

In 1717 Abicht became nominated *Generalsuperintendent*, an office comparable to bishop or dean of the church of Gdansk. In 1729 Abicht was appointed professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, and *Generalsuperintendent* of the Saxony electorate. Furthermore, he served as a pastor at the Lutheran Church in Wittenberg.

Abicht was an orthodox Lutheran theologian and due to his scholarship in Judaism and Hebrew a defender of an orthodox interpretation of the Holy Bible. From this scholarly background he opposed the materialistic philosophy of John Locke as well as the prevalent rational theology of LEIBNIZ and WOLFF, both schools becoming fashionable and popular at that time. Against these upcoming philosophical systems in the wake of the Enlightenment era, Abicht became the

leading voice among the Wittenberg's orthodox Lutheran theologians. He retired from his clerical functions in 1739. For his outstanding scholarship in Hebrew philology he was awarded with a membership of the Prussian Society of Sciences. Johann Georg Abicht died in Wittenberg on 5 June 1740.

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## **HOTTINGER, Johann Jakob (1750–1819)**

Johann Jakob Hottinger was born in Hausen near Zurich on 2 February 1750, his great-grandfather was the famous theologian Johann Jakob Hottinger (1652–1735). Hottinger registered at the Carolinum in Zurich, which later became the University of Zurich in 1763 to study philology. With a scholarship he traveled through Switzerland to Geneva and further to Göttingen, where he continued his studies and made friends with J.G.H. FEDER. After his graduation he went back to Zurich and became a professor of Latin and philosophy at the Carolinum in 1774. He also served as an assistant to his former academic teacher, Johann Jakob Steinbrüchel. From 1789 on, he additionally taught philology at the Collegium Humanitatis in Zurich. After Steinbrüchel's death in 1796, he was appointed to overtake his teacher's professorship for Greek and hermeneutics. For some periods of his career Hottinger was also chancellor of the Carolinum.

Hottinger had a wide-spread reputation as an inspiring teacher and excellent scholar in classics and literature and therefore received offers from many Universities abroad, among them also Göttingen and Heidelberg, but Hottinger preferred to stay in Zurich for his entire life and career. As a scholar Hottinger published numerous philological editions and translations of Greek classics. From 1784 to 1786 he published the *Bibliothek der neuesten theologischen, philosophischen und schoenen Litteratur* in Zurich. He was also an author of biographies, of poetic and prosaic writings and of patriotic novels and dramas.

Hottinger was committed to Enlightenment philosophy and opposed dogmatic, orthodox theology. In his papers he argued for a rationalistic and

scientific approach to theological questions. Yet, he also wrote against the natural philosophers of the materialistic school. Notably, he wrote openly against the materialist and atheist Paul Henri Thiry D'HOLBACH (1723–89) and his book *Système de la nature*. Hottinger also made acquaintance with the Swiss theologian Johann Kaspar LAVATER, but unfortunately, due to a private dispute, the scholarly exchange did not last very long. Hottinger retired in 1814 and died on 14 February 1819, in Zurich.

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**RUNGE, Conrad Heinrich (1731–92)**

Conrad Heinrich Runge was born in Bremen on 12 October 1731. His father, Ludolf H. Runge was a professor of pharmacy, logic and metaphysics at the town's University, his mother's name was Lucia E. Runge (born Klugkist) – his uncle was the pastor Konrad Klugkist. Runge attended the reformed secondary school in Bremen, and studied theology in Frankfurt/Oder, in Göttingen and in Leiden where he graduated in 1758. Right after his graduation Runge was offered the position of a pastor at the Reformed church in Celle, lower Saxony. Runge became a reformed theologian and pastor committed to the upraising ideas of Enlightenment. His preaching and sermons were popular widely across the borders of Saxony.

Runge was also a corresponding member of the Academic Society of Göttingen, and conducted a widespread exchange of letters with numerous scholars of his time. Most notable is Runge's extensive philosophical correspondence with the Swiss theologian Johann Kaspar LAVATER, who, at the time of the correspondence, pursued pietistic, mystic views. The intense scholarly exchange with his friend led to Runge's main work *Des Herrn Diaconus Lavaters eigentliche Meynung von den Gaben des Heiligen Geistes, der Kraft des Glaubens und des Gebetes*. Today these volumes of letters are valuable historical documents of a dispute between theological reformed and enlightened versus mystic views.

By 1770, Runge had returned to Bremen, as he was nominated 'third preacher' at the St Ansgarii Church. At the end of his career, by 1786, he had advanced to the position of the 'first preacher' of his church. Runge died in his hometown Bremen on 2 June 1792.

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### **SALZMANN, Friedrich Rudolf** (1749–1821)

Friedrich Rudolf Salzmann (also Frederic-Rodolphe) was born in Strasbourg on 9 March 1749. He was a significant Alsatian publicist, theosophist, writer and journalist. He studied theology and law in his home town University, from where he graduated in 1773. After his studies he moved to Göttingen in 1774 to become the educator of the later famous Prussian minister Karl Freiherr von Stein. For his services for the von Stein family, Salzmann became a nobleman and received the title of a confidential legation counsellor ('Geheimer Legationsrat'). Moving back to Strasbourg again, Salzmann acquired an academic bookshop that also included a political reading institute and a print shop, which published Strasbourg's newspaper, the *Straßburger Post*.

From 1776 to 1777, Salzmann published the patriotic magazine *Der Bürgerfreund*, in collaboration with the theologian Jean Laurent Blessig, the pedagogue and social reformer Johann Friedrich Oberlin, the romantic writers Jakob Michael Reinhold LENZ, and Heinrich Leopold Wagner, all of them were in the circle around the famous J.G.W. GOETHE as well. Later on Salzmann became editor of the publications of the German Society (*Deutsche Gesellschaft*). From 1787 to 1789, right at the break out of the French Revolution, Salzmann published the journal *Avantcoureur oder Verzeichnis der neuesten französischen Schriften*. He also



entertained a wide-ranging correspondence with important writers, poets and theosophists of his time, for example with Heinrich von Schubert, the baroness Juliane von Krüdener, Johann Heinrich Jung (JUNG-STILLING) and Johann Kaspar LAVATER. During the revolutionary years he wrote critical papers and political speeches for the Strasbourg civil council.

Although Salzmann was an important Strasbourg publisher, today, Salzmann is perhaps best known as a theosophist and mystic. His most popular work, *Alles wird Neu werden* (All Will Be Renewed), appeared in two volumes in 1802 respectively in 1810. These volumes are a collection of seven pieces of theosophical studies, meditations and personal notes. In his writings Salzmann refers extensively to other well-known theosophists, such as the mystics Antoinette Bourignon, Jane Lead, and the Swedish scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (who is discussed in Kants *Träume eines Geistersehers* as well). Salzmann's theosophical writings deal with topics such as life after death and resurrection, as he tried to develop supporting arguments for the Catholic dogma of purgatory. Friedrich Rudolf Salzmann died in his hometown of Strasbourg in 1821. Aside from his numerous publications such as books, journals, political and theosophical papers, Salzmann also left a large corpus of unpublished manuscripts.

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**SCHÖPFLIN, Johann Daniel** (1694–1771)

Johann Daniel Schöpflin was born in Sulzburg near Basle on 6 September 1694. He was a historian, a professor of rhetoric and constitutional law, and a teacher of J.W. GOETHE. Schöpflin went to school in Durlach and Basle, and entered university in 1707 to study Greek, mathematics and physics, where J. Bernouilli was one of his teachers. However, his scholarly interests soon switched to history and philology, especially to Latin. In 1711, he moved to the University of Strasbourg, where the philologist Johann Kaspar Kuhn became his academic teacher and mentor. In 1720, Schöpflin was appointed as Kuhns successor for the chair of history and eloquence.

Schöpflin enjoyed a widespread reputation as an outstanding historian and innovative teacher. At the University of Strasbourg he established an institute for political sciences, constitutional law and diplomacy, which attracted students from all over Europe. Famous politicians such as count Cobenzl and count Metternich of Austria, or the Russian diplomat Andrei Rasumofsky have been educated there.

A study grant from his University allowed him to travel through Europe from 1726 to 1728. He visited Paris, as well as Italian cities, such as Turin, Verona, Padua, Venice, and Rome to conduct several historiographical and philological studies. In England he met with the famous philologist Richard Bentley. Subsequent travels brought him to Marburg, Jena, Leibzig, Prague and Vienna. Having returned from this extensive study trip, Schöpflin began to work intensely on his historiographical project about the history of Alsace, for which he became famous and appreciated

until today. For the history of Alsace project he devoted the following twenty years, and the results finally appeared as the *Alsatia illustrata* in two volumes in 1751 and 1761. The *Alsatia* remains an indispensable historical source until nowadays, especially the first volume, which traces the history of Alsace in the Celtic, Roman and Frankish time. His last comprehensive historiographical project was the compilation of a family chronology for the Margrave Karl Friedrich von Baden, which was published in seven volumes between 1763 and 1766 as the *Historia Zaringo-Badensis*.

Schöpflin died in Strasbourg on 7 August 1771. His extensive scholarly correspondence is a valuable document about the academic, scientific and cultural life of that time. It is also an important historical source for the dramatic political changes during the period of Enlightenment.

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#### **WIEGLEB, Johann Christian** (1732–1800)

Johann Christian Wiegleb was born in Langensalza on 21 December 1732. He was a pioneer in natural sciences, and one of the founding fathers of modern chemistry and pharmacy. Wiegleb, who studied chemistry at the University of Dresden, opened a pharmacy in his home town Langensalza in 1759, which he operated until 1796. In the laboratory of his pharmacy Wiegleb conducted self-designed experimental research and developed innovative chemical and pharmaceutical procedures. He studied processes of fermentation, experimented with alkaline salts, explored acid reactions and conducted extensive research on the chemical nature of minerals. As a natural scientist committed to the ideas of enlightenment, he opposed alchemy, which had been the leading doctrine in natural philosophy of his days. His paper *Historisch Critische Untersuchung der Alchemie oder der eingebildeten*

*Goldmacherkunst* was one of the most persuasive contribution against alchemy and a plea for chemistry as a science. Antoine Laurent de Lavoisier (1743–94), who lived and worked in Paris, was Wiegleb's contemporary. Together with de Lavoisier, Wiegleb counts as one of the most influential scientists of the Enlightenment era, since he significantly contributed to the scientific foundations of chemistry and pharmacy.

In 1776, Wiegleb founded a private school for pharmacy, and two of his former students, Sigismund F. Hermbstädt, later on professor of chemistry in Berlin, and Johann F.A. Götting, professor of chemistry in Jena, continued Wiegleb's work in establishing further pharmaceutical institutions in Germany. Wiegleb authored standard textbooks in chemistry and pharmacy for many generations after, such as the *Handbuch der allgemeinen Chemie* and the *Deutsches Apothekerbuch*. For his scientific achievements Wiegleb was nominated member of the Leopoldiana, the German Academy of Natural Sciences, as well as of the Academy of Popular Sciences in Erfurt. Wiegleb died in his hometown of Langensalza on 16 January 1800.

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### **WYTTENBACH, David Samuel Daniel, der Ältere (1706–79)**

David Samuel Daniel Wytttenbach was born in Bern on 26 June 1706. He was a descendant of an old-established Swiss family of theologians, and father of the humanist Daniel Albert WYTTENBACH. He himself became an important Enlightenment theologian of his time.

Wytttenbach entered the University of Bern to study theology in 1718. During his studies he discovered the philosophy of LEIBNIZ and Christian WOLFF, and moved to Marburg in 1735 to study with the famous Wolff in person. After his graduation from the University of Marburg he embarked on a study trip to Saxony, the Netherlands and Paris until he finally returned to Bern to work as an assistant to his father, the pastor Daniel Wytttenbach. In 1740 he became deacon of the 'Heiligen Geist Kirche' in Bern and in 1746 professor for theology at the University of Bern. In 1756, the reformed Lutheran landgrave Wilhelm VIII of Hessen-Kassel offered Wytttenbach a professorship at the University of Marburg where he then taught moral theology, hermeneutics and clerical law until 1779. From 1764 to 1767 Wytttenbach was also Dean of the theological faculty at the University of Marburg.

Wytttenbach's main achievements mainly regard his enlightened and reformed approach to theology. He supported a reformed dogmatism in theology, and shared the philosophical rationalism of Leibniz and Wolff, dividing theology into a *theologia naturalis* and a *theologia revelata*.

His papers and compendia were very popular in his time, among students and scholars alike. During the years of an assistant to his father, Wytttenbach published the *Tentamen theologiae dogmaticae* in three volumes, a compendium of



theological dogma, applying demonstrative and systematic argumentation taken from Wolff. Wyttenbach also maintained a wide-ranging correspondence with other theologians, such as Johann Philipp Fresenius, the leading head of the Lutheran ministry in Frankfurt. Furthermore, he became counsellor of the consistory ('Konsistorialrat') and inspector of the Reformed churches and schools of Oberhessen. Wyttenbach died in Marburg on 29 June 1779.

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**WYTTENBACH, Daniel Albert, der Jüngere** (1746–1820)

Daniel Albert Wytttenbach was born in Bern on 7 August 1746. He was the son of the renowned theologian David Samuel Daniel WYTTENBACH, professor of theology at the Universities of Bern and Marburg. The Wytttenbachs were an old-established Swiss family of scholars and theologians - one of their ancestors was the theologian Thomas Wytttenbach (1472–1526). Daniel Albert registered at the University of Marburg in 1760 to study mathematics, Greek and Hebrew philology, philosophy and history. Due to his academic teacher Christian Gottlob HEYNE, the young Wytttenbach discovered his passion for the Greek classics, and he focused his studies

to the works of Plato and other Greek scholarly scripts. In 1768 he switched to the University of Göttingen and in 1770 to the University of Leiden, to study with two of the most famous philologists of that time, namely with David RUHNKEN (a close friend of KANT) and Tiberius Hemsterhuis.

Wytttenbach graduated in 1771 and shortly after became professor at the college of the Remonstrants in Amsterdam. In 1779 he received an appointment as a professor of philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. From 1785 on, Wytttenbach was professor of history and eloquence, and Greek and Latin literature, until he moved back to the University of Leiden to succeed Ruhnken's chair after his death in 1798. He also followed Ruhnken in the prestigious office of the Librarian of Leiden University, Ruhnken was the 12<sup>th</sup>, Wytttenbach became the 13<sup>th</sup> Librarian.

Wytttenbach was furthermore a member of the Dutch Academy of Sciences and a 'foreign member' of the French Academy of Sciences. He retired from his academic positions and functions in 1818.

Wytttenbach's academic fame and merits lie in the area of Greek philology as he is regarded as one of the founding fathers of modern Greek philological scholarship. He developed and set new standards regarding the study of grammar, syntax and styles, as well as for the interpretation and translation of Greek classical texts. His philosophical views were committed to the principles of humanism and Enlightenment, and he supported the rational metaphysics of Christian WOLFF. During his time in Amsterdam, Wytttenbach published the periodical *Bibliotheca critica*. As a tribute to his much adored teacher David Ruhnken, Wytttenbach wrote

the *Vita Ruhnkenii*. His edition of the *Plutarchi Chaeronensis Moralia*, became a standard text for students and scholars of his time and many generations after.

Wytttenbach died on 17 January 1820 in Oegsgeert. Posthumously his *Opuscula* were collected and published in two volumes in 1823 in Leiden. Together with his teachers David Ruhnken, Tiberius Hemsterhuis, and his peer Lodewyk Valckenaer, Daniel Albert Wytttenbach is today considered as one of the most influential humanists of the eighteenth century.

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