AESTHETICISM AND THE ROMANTIC ABSOLUTE:
NEW MYTHOLOGY OF EARLY GERMAN ROMANTICISM

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Aestheticism and the Romantic Absolute: New Mythology of

Early German Romanticism

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Abstract

Onur Küçükarslan, "Aestheticism and Romantic Absolute: New Mythology of Early German Romanticism"

This study claims that Early German Romanticism introduced an authentic and independent philosophical perspective by refusing various dualisms of Kant and Fichte's postulation of first principles and foundations of subjectivist aesthetic tradition. It is maintained that the preservation of the ground of the subject while rejecting the priority of the Ego; and the defense of Absolutism without the refusal of pluralism makes Early German Romanticism an actual and strong alternative among contemporary criticisms of modernity. The common misunderstanding that Early German Romanticism belongs to the anti-rationalist strand is rejected and it is shown that the Romantics preserved, even radicalized some of the fundamental ideals of Enlightenment and the principles of the rationalist school.

It is maintained that the Romantics stressed the importance of individuality in reaction against the formalism of Kant's ethics and that they invented a moral program based on sensibility and aesthetic sense following Schiller. Their argument that it is only art which can reveal the truth and their rejection of the individualism of contract theories in politics are other major discussions of the thesis.

A discussion of the philosophical programs of Kant, Fichte and Schiller and the comparison of major Romantic arguments with these is the major methodological strategy of the study.

Keywords: Romanticism, Schlegel, Novalis, irony, genius, Absolute.

Tez Özeti

Onur Küçükarslan, “Estetizm ve Romantik Mutlak: Erken Alman Romantizminin Yeni Mitolojisi”

Bu çalışma, Erken Alman Romantizmi’nin Kant’ın ikiliklerini, Fichte’nin temel ilkelerde ısrarını ve öznelci estetik geleneğinin temellerini reddederek özgün ve bağımsız bir felsefi bakış açısı ortaya koyduğunu iddia etmektedir. Benliğin önceliğinin reddine rağmen öznelliğin temellerinin korunumu ve çoğulculuğun reddi söz konusu olmaksızın Mutlak kategorisinin savunusunun, Erken Alman Romantizmi’ni çağdaş modernite eleştirileri arasında hala güncel ve güçlü kıldığı öne sürülmektedir.

Erken Alman Romantizmi’nin anti-rasyonalist akıma dahil olduğu yönündeki yaygın kanı reddedilmekte ve Romantiklerin Aydınlanma’nın ve akılcı okulun temel hedeflerinden bir kısmını koruduğu, hatta ileriye taşıdığı gösterilmektedir.

Romantiklerin Kant’ın biçimci ahlak öğretisine karşı bireyselliğin önemini vurguladıkları ve Schiller’i izleyerek duygu ve estetik duyu üzerine kurulu bir ahlaki program türettikleri öne sürülmektedir. Erken Alman Romantizmi’nin doğrunun ancak sanat yoluyla açığa vurulacağı iddiası ve politik alanda sözleşme kuramlarının bireyciliğini reddi tezin diğer temel tartışmaları arasında yer almaktadır.

Kant, Fichte ve Schiller’in felsefi programlarının tartışılması ve temel Romantik önermelerin bunlarla karşılaştırılması çalışmanın temel yöntemsel stratejisidir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Romantizm, Schlegel, Novalis, ironi, deha, Mutlak.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The term Romanticism has many connotations, but it is rarely used to demonstrate the philosophical perspective which is the main concern of this thesis. The meaning of the term in our everyday language is widely shaped by popular culture; and regular people would probably consider Don Juan or Casanova as the pioneers of Romanticism, rather than Novalis or F. Schlegel, who are responsible for the modern meaning of the German term *romantisch* ("romantic"). What is problematic is not this genial case, but rather the fact that Romanticism as a philosophical doctrine has been underrated, misinterpreted, even disparaged also within intellectual circles for many centuries.

To some extent, this misfortune has some reasonable explanations. First of all, the greatest part of the theoretical writings of members of the Early Romantic School was not even published until the twentieth century[1] and as a result Romanticism was seen as a mere literary circle by many. Even after the publication of the main philosophical works, the Romantic canon was barely recognized and translated by the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

Another major problem was the very obscure and personal language and the choice of textual style of the Romantics. The fragmentary, incomplete and sometimes contradictory structure of the Romantic canon confused many readers. Even at his time, F. Schlegel confused his contemporaries, as the ironical rumor "what one does not understand, should have been written by a Schlegel" became very popular.

[1] The critical edition of Novalis including all of his theoretical work became available only in 1929.

What is very dramatic is that it was not the Romantics' own views but some political interpretations of the Romantic program which shaped the common understanding of Romanticism in the twentieth century. According to Beiser (2003):

> Beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, and then reaching a crescendo in the 1920s and 1930s, German nationalists and conservatives embraced romanticism because they too believed it to be opposed to the *Aufklaerung* ["Enlightenment"], in their view, however such opposition was a virtue rather than a vice, since the Enlightenment was an alien ideology imported from France and hostile to the German spirit. After World War II the same entrenched attitudes reappeared, now reinvigorated by the reaction against fascism (p. 43).

It is true, that Romanticism received the status of official ideology in the Nazi era. This fact strengthened the widespread accusation of Romanticism with irrationalism, since the ideology of the Nazis was widely considered as being a rejection of the rationalist Enlightenment project. This one-sided relation and related prejudices against Romanticism influenced especially the position of many Marxist scholars after the World War II, and built a huge wall between Marxist interpreters and the Romantics. Especially the interpretation of Romanticism by two respected Marxist aestheticians of the twentieth century has been a determining factor. Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs started a war against the Romantic School in his major work *Destruction of Reason* and Austrian Marxist Ernst Fischer accused Romantics of being irrationalist in his famous book *The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach*. These two works shaped the common understanding of Romanticism.

Of course, it is not the duty of a philosophy thesis to consider the Nazi abuse of Romanticism, but the relation of the Romantics with the philosophical tradition of irrationalism will be deeply examined in the next chapters.

The similarity between the situations out of which German Romanticism and National Socialism arose is important in this respect.

A sudden and harsh cultural transformation, a deep political crisis and decadence were common to both phases of the German population. Germany in the eighteenth century was strongly divided and underdeveloped, provincialism was the mainstream ideology in the country and the German population was extremely poor, deeply pious and strongly humiliated. The result of this picture was various forms of anti-culture, anti-intellectualism and xenophobia. Isaiah Berlin (1999) points out that a violent hatred of France, of wigs, of silk stockings, of salons, of corruption, of generals, of emperors, of all the great and magnificent figures of this world, who are simply incarnations of wealth, wickedness and the devil was the common understanding of the whole German nation at that time. The lack of a sense of world importance was a spiritual result of this understanding. Most of the intellectuals, artists and philosophers of that era turned inwards and produced violently emotional and personal works; modesty and isolation were their common characteristics.

Francke (1895) quotes from Tieck, who pictured this mood of his youth against enlightenment, secularism and cosmopolitanism impressively in the preface to a second edition of his book *William Lovell*:

> My youth fell in those times when not only in Germany, but in the greater part of the civilized world the sense for the beautiful, the sublime, and the mysterious seemed to have been sunk to sleep. A shallow enlightenment, to which the divine appeared as an empty dream, ruled the day; indifference toward religion was called freedom of thought, indifference toward country cosmopolitanism. In the struggle against these predominant views, I sought to conquer for myself a quiet place where nature, art, and faith might again be cultivated; and this endeavor led me to hold up to the opposing party (the party of Enlightenment) a picture of their own confusion and spiritual wantonness (p. 84-85).

It was especially Hamann and Herder, who theorized these concerns of the generation. Both knew Kant personally very well and challenged his philosophy a lot, by arguing that pure reason does not have the Kantian independence. But their most important thesis was that poetry has primacy over philosophy (Ameriks, 2000).

Hamann's fundamental thought was that God speaks to us through history and nature. That every phenomenon of nature is a word of God was an old mystical belief; Hamann added that historical events are not empirical; they are images of the d*ivine*. God speaks through these images and it is the task of the poet, who is the real student of nature, to translate these images into ordinary language. The philosopher interprets nature, but the poet imitates it to bring it to its destiny. What was really inspiring is that this mystical incarnation and revelation of Hamann, his relation between spirit and nature was explained in mere linguistic terms (Dahlstrom, 2000).

In a similar way, according to Dahlstrom, Herder argued that "all substances are sustained by divine force" and that "sensibility and instinct, imagination and reason are merely determinations of a single force" (p. 82). Herder placed the language in the center of his system, because he thought that self-determination is the basis of this instrumental system of signs designating thoughts and objects. It was culture and language which distinguish our species; man becomes man if and only when he speaks. Ameriks (2000) wrote that "despite the differences between Hamann's orthodox Christian commitments, Herder's liberal interest in cultural diversity, and Schiller's deeply moralistic but non-Christian approach, all three thinkers shared the responsibility for a very influential 'holistic turn in German thought'" (p. 14).

The most important failure in the readings of romanticism is the widespread supposition that there is a single anti-rationalist strand in German intellectual history which connects a whole line of figures from Hamann and Herder through the romantics and after (Ameriks, 2000). Most of the commentators focused on general associations of the term Romanticism with conservative, mystical and anti-scientific

traditions in the everyday language, resulting in a wrong image of German Romanticism.

That German Romanticism consisted of three strongly conflicting circles was not even taken into consideration for most of the time. The three phases should be differentiated clearly: *Frühromantik* ("Early Romanticism"), Jena Romantics or Early German Romanticism, which will be the one and only concern of this thesis and will be referred to from now on simply as *Romanticism* or *the Romantics* within the text; the Heidelberg Romantics consisting mainly of Arnim, Brentano, Caspar David Friedrich; and the Late Romantics who were active in the 1830s. It is a common argument that the last volume of the magazine *Athenaeum*, which was published by A. W. Schlegel and F. Schlegel, marked the end of the first phase, i.e., Early German Romanticism. It was followed by F. Schlegel's conversion to Catholicism, while Novalis had already adopted extremely conservative ideals in his work *Christianity and Europe* which was written in 1799 under the influence of Schleiermacher but not published until 1826. Followers of the Romantic circle after the first phase lost their interest in philosophical questions; they were concerned mainly with the reading of Christianity and German culture; and in a strong contrast to Early German Romanticism, they adopted extremely conservative and monarchist principles.

Another problem is that there is rarely an agreement on who the members of the Early Romantic Movement were. One of the broadest frameworks was that of Richards (2002), which represents a very consistent and objective interpretation and will be accepted in the context of this thesis.

> Canonically membership in the group referred to as early Romantics is usually confined to the brothers Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, their wives Caroline and Dorothea, the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, the poets and novelist Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis),

> the theorist of the fine arts Wilhelm Wackenroder, and the philosopher Friedrich Schelling (p. 17).

On the other hand, Manfred Frank distinctively includes Hölderlin within the Romantics and represents the nucleus of the group as consisting of Novalis, Hölderlin and F. Schlegel. Actually the membership of Hölderlin was always a confusing question among scholars. Hölderlin, who was not a close friend of F. Schlegel and Novalis, presented his philosophical ideas in 1795, i.e., one year before F. Schlegel and Novalis developed their Romantic program in 1796. Hölderlin is held responsible for the anonymous text from 1795, which is known today as the *The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism*, together with his onetime flat mates Hegel and Schelling. Although some very fundamental principles of what we consider Early German Romanticism are found in this text, it has been argued by many that it does not belong to the circle historically, since it was published only in 1917 by Franz Rosenzweig. As Heidegger pointed out, Hölderlin's metaphysics also remains entirely foreign to the metaphysics of German Idealism (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 1988). Following this perspective, Hölderlin will not be considered as a regular member of the Early German Romanticism, but some of his arguments will be discussed in the thesis.

This thesis focuses mainly on the writings of Novalis and F. Schlegel, since they are accepted as the philosophical founders of Romanticism. It should be shortly explained why Schelling will be referred to only once in the fifth chapter. Although Schelling in his early period contributed to the Romantic circle, he was after a systematic philosophy which distinguished him from the Romantics. I strongly believe that his work should be considered mainly as part of German Idealism, for Schelling completes the picture between Fichte and Hegel.

All the other characters of the circle will not be evaluated in the thesis, since Schleiermacher's Romantic world, his understanding of philosophy and aesthetics remained within his theological framework; Tieck's and Wackenroder's theoretical contributions were limited to some personal considerations on art history; and Caroline and Dorothea's perspectives remained under the protection of the Schlegel brothers.

There are some other major misunderstandings which will be corrected in the thesis. The main goals and arguments of the thesis are related to the following points.

Beiser (2003) points out that the standard interpretation maintains that the main goal of the young romantics was to create a new romantic literature and criticism, which they developed in reaction against the neoclassical literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It will be argued that this common belief is absolutely wrong. The central ideal of the Romantics was primarily ethical and political rather than critical and literary. The ethical and political have primacy over the literary and critical in the sense that the Romantic theory of aesthetics was guided by their ethical and political ideas.

Another common false belief is that Romanticism was an essentially conservative ideology, breaking with the values of the Enlightenment. It will be shown that the Romantics preserved, even radicalized, some of the fundamental ideals of Enlightenment, like freedom, progress, individuality etc. It will be concluded that it is incorrect to characterize Romanticism as either a complete endorsement or as a mere rejection of modernity. The fact that the Romantics, who hated the French enlightenment when they were youngsters as pictured in Tieck's quotation, evolved into loyal republicans and that they adopted the fundamental

ideals of the French Enlightenment[2] during the enthusiastic days of the French Revolution confirms this argument. Most Romantics were not revolutionaries but reformists, with the possible exception of Hölderlin, since they rejected the practice of the Revolution; and this should be the reason of their aestheticism as they saw art as the main instrument of *Bildung* ("formation") and of social and political reform.

Romanticism was thus exposed as a product of a mixture of the anti-cosmopolitan and mystical beliefs of their youth and the progressive ideals of their early adulthood. F. Schlegel's (1982) famous declaration shows that Romanticism cannot be reduced to mere conservatism: "The French revolution, Fichte's Theory of Knowledge, and Goethe's Wilhelm Meister are the three great tendencies of the age" (p. 129).

The last major misinterpretation which will be rejected is that Romanticism should be considered as a mere derivation of Fichtean philosophy. A whole section is dedicated to Fichte, to show the importance and adaptation of Fichtean notions like striving, representation and self-consciousness by the Romantics; and a second one is dedicated to the Romantic critique of Fichtean subjectivism. Related to this discussion, another major argument of the thesis is that Romanticism should be considered as an experiment of objectification of the Fichtean system through the injection of a Spinozistic dimension.

[2] The two wives of the Schlegel brothers, Caroline and Dorothea are considered as being the main revolutionary influence on the circle. They achieved renown as revolutionary activists during the French occupation of west Germany and their intellectual and political personalities influenced not only their husbands, but also Schiller and Goethe, who visited them often during their stay in Jena. The fact that almost every intellectual character of the era belonged to the lower classes might also have influenced the political views of Romantics. As Berlin (1999) points out, "Kant, Herder, Fichte were all very humbly born. Hegel, Schelling, Schiller, Hölderlin were lower middle-class. Goethe was a rich bourgeois but attained to a proper title only later. Only Kleist and Novalis were what would in those days be called country gentlemen" (p. 38).

The title of the thesis underlines the two most important and definitive conceptions of the Romantic circle: Aestheticism and Romantic Absolute. Before all else, it should be determined what is particularly meant by these concepts.

Aestheticism can have two distinct and sometimes confusing meanings in general terms. The first definition signifies that art exists for the sake of its beauty alone, and the second meaning connotes that beauty is the basic principle from which all other principles are derived. It will be shown in this study that the first meaning of the term is clearly rejected by the Romantics and the second meaning is modified sharply. Romantic Aestheticism distinctively accepts beauty as the basic principle and means to achieve truth and moral perfection; but it does not subordinate morality, politics and epistemology to aesthetics. Romantic Aestheticism signifies that beauty is the central principle which unites aesthetic, epistemic, moral and political realms. This specific definition and defense of Aestheticism makes Romanticism the forerunner of modern aesthetics.

On the other hand, their authentic understanding of the *Absolute* distinguishes Romantics from older metaphysical perspectives. Friederich Beiser (2002) argues that there are three sources for the conception of the Romantic Absolute, which are Spinoza's Monism, Herder's Vitalism, Plato's Ideas. In this context, it can be claimed that the notion of the *Romantic Absolute* carries and combines the three arguments corresponding accordingly to Monism, Vitalims and Plato's Idealism, that the universe consists in not a plurality of substances, but a single substance; that the single universal substance is an organism, which is in a constant process of growth and development; and that this process of development has a purpose, or conforms to some form, archetype, or idea. The concept of the Absolute as used in this study should be understood in this context.

The second part of the title is an attempt to denominate the entire Romantic project together with its aesthetic, moral, political and metaphysical expansions. It was F. Schlegel who urged the need of a "New Mythology". What F. Schlegel meant by the term *mythology* was not a form of narrative, but a totality of aesthetic, moral and political codes which design not only our everyday lives, but also history. In this sense also Novalis' *General Draft*, his unfinished Encyclopedia could be compared to Hesiod's *Theogony*. Both F. Schlegel and Novalis attempted to provide us a new set of concepts, moods and means to live harmonious lives within society, with nature and with the God. It is the task of this thesis to illustrate, characterize and study the *New Mythology* as created by the Romantics.

The thesis consists of six chapters including the Introduction and the Conclusion. The structure and the content of the four chapters of the main text are as follows.

The second chapter is dedicated to Kant and to his influence on Early German Romanticism following the argument that Kant is the one who opened the way to Romanticism. In the first section of the chapter Kant's dualism between freedom and nature is discussed and it is shown how Kant ensured the autonomy of reason and the freedom of man, but at the same time achieved to secure the existence of the external world. In the second section of the second chapter, it is shown that morality is conceived as an individual, even as a private affair between a person and his conscience in Kant's ethics, and it is argued that the critique of the individualistic characteristics of morality and the denial of the role of sensibility is the starting point of the Romantic conception of morality. In the third and last section of the chapter, it is discussed how the *Critique of Judgment* functions as a mediating basis between the pure and the practical conceptions of reason. Kant's notion of imagination is

evaluated in order to clarify Kant's claim of universality for the subjective aesthetic judgment and the duality between the beautiful and sublime is analyzed, to show that for Kant the beauty of nature surpasses the beauty of art. It is also shown how Kant established art and beauty not as subordinate to our judgments of truth and morality, but as independent of both. At the end of the section, it is discussed how Kant's statement (Kant, 1790) that beauty hints symbolically at morality, influenced the romantic conception of aesthetics.

The third chapter is dedicated to two philosophers who directly and personally influenced romantic philosophy, namely Fichte and Schiller. In the first section of the third chapter the major arguments of the German philosophers Maimon, Reinhold, Schulze and Jacobi are introduced in order to be able to explain the transition from Kant to Fichte. Maimon's conclusion that the whole realm of experience of Kant is an illusion; Jacobi's inversion of the relation between reason and faith; Schulze's argument that the idea of a first principle as the basis of philosophy is absolutely wrong, and Reinhold's principle of consciousness which made the subject itself the criterion for truth and reality are discussed, and Fichte's critique of these positions is signified. In the next section, Fichte's relation with Kant's philosophy is examined. It is shown that according to Fichte (1982) dogmatism, including Kant, focuses upon the thing rather than the subject, whereas critical philosophy focuses upon freedom as its starting point and rejects the existence of the Kantian thing in itself. It is concluded that Fichte needs to posit a self consciousness where subject and object are united in order to explain consciousness and self representation. The next section is dedicated to Fichte's notion of *first principle,* which is severely criticized by the Romantic tradition. It is indicated that the first principle of Fichte's major work (1794) is the supposition that

"the *I* originally posits its own being unconditionally". In the next section titled *Freedom and Striving*, it is manifested that the self-consciousness of freedom is a necessary condition for the deduction of experience, for the awareness of objective reality for Fichte. It is pointed out that the finite Ego of Fichte constantly strives to make nature conform to the demands of rational activity, and though the subject never gains complete control over nature, the ideal of the absolute Ego is realized through its striving. In the last section dedicated to Fichte, how Fichte's conception of *intellectual intuition* can be related to aesthetics and how the Romantics equipped their artist with Fichtean intellectual intuition is examined.

In the next section of the third chapter which is dedicated to Schiller, how Schiller made the transition from Kantian to Romantic aesthetics possible is studied. The next section studies Schiller's arguments in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*. His theory of drives is summarized and it is argued that Schiller aims to save our feelings against the domination of reason with his notion of the *play drive*. In the last section of the third chapter, Schiller's aesthetics is examined in depth. It is argued that whereas Kant's *beauty* hints at morality only symbolically, there is a higher and direct unity of aesthetics and morality in Schiller's picture.

The fourth chapter deals with the epistemology and ontology of Early German Romanticism. In the first section of this chapter, the meaning of the term *romantic* and the conflicting arguments of Haym and Lovejoy on the origin of the term is discussed. It is argued that Lovejoy's perspective is extremely problematic, because he underrates the philosophical background of F. Schlegel's intellectual transformation. The next section discusses the Romantics' love and hate relation with Fichte. It is shown that the Romantics believe that we can never begin with the

certain knowledge that there is any first principle like Fichte, instead we must accept the organic unity and plurality of starting points in philosophy. It is argued that this feeling of incompleteness is the origin of infinite striving for knowledge and freedom according to the Romantic circle. In the next section, the foundations of the concept of *Romantic irony* are examined in relation to Socratic irony. Other concepts in this section which are taken into account related to irony are *chaos, wit, humor* and *fragment*. The next section is dedicated to the concept of *Romantic absolute* and the Spinozistic dimension of Romantic philosophy. It is shown that with the aid of Spinoza, the Romantics injected realism into Fichte's philosophy; and the injection of freedom into Spinoza's static and mechanic universe brought the subjective element on a cosmic scale. Their conception of God, their understanding of *nature* and the *thing* are other elements discussed in this section. The next section focuses on two sources of Romantic conception of nature, namely *Vitalism* and *Naturphilosophie* ("philosophy of nature") which influenced Novalis' position that a complete control over our bodies is possible. This understanding is related to Novalis' notions of *death* and *immortality*, and F. Schlegel's Vitalistic notion of *things as dialogue partners* is evaluated in this respect. The question of whether these influences are responsible for an irrationalist tendency in Romanticism is also discussed.

The last chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the twofold relationship between aesthetics and morality in Romantic philosophy. In the first section the Romantics' conceptions of *modern* and *ancient* art are compared in the light of Schiller's understanding of *sentimental* and *naïve poetry*; and it is argued that though more akin to sentimental poetry, *romantic poetry* also adopts some qualities of naïve poetry. Hölderlin's aesthetic program and his notion of *aesthetic sense* and Novalis'

hierarchy of poetic and artistic modes are some other issues that are taken into account. In the second section of the fifth chapter, the concept of genius and the Romantic understanding of artistic production are studied. It is argued that Romantic philosophy aims at a synthesis of the traditional doctrines of imitation and expression in which the creative and free activity of the artist is no more than the highest expression of the powers of nature, since it is nature that reveals itself through the artist. The question of how nature reveals itself through *the genius* is based upon the thesis that the genius is inborn by the free gift of nature. The last section of the last chapter focuses upon the Romantic understanding of morality and politics. It is argued that the Romantics insisted on the autonomy of art not in spite of, but because of its moral and political ends. The Romantic understanding of religion as a substitute for educational goals is also connected to this argument. It is shown that *communalism* and *pluralism* are among the major characteristics of the Romantic school; and the *nationalism* of Hölderlin is studied in this respect. The section is concluded by showing how the Romantics' transition to conservatism and the end of Early German Romanticism is marked by their political views.

The last chapter, namely the conclusion, is structured as a discussion on the major questions and conclusions of the thesis and aims to picture the major contributions of Romanticism to the history of philosophy as an authentic philosophical school under four headings.

CHAPTER 2

KANT AND HIS DUALISMS

Introduction

One of the main arguments of this thesis is that the early Romantics have no predecessors since they initiated a new and unique way of thinking in the history of philosophy. But without doubt, it was Kant who opened up the possibility for Romanticism.

According to many the whole world of philosophy became post-Kantian after Kant, in the sense that Kantian terminology and framework became a standard. It should be sufficient to point out that the young Romantics were educated within this framework around the end of the 1780s, when the Kantian philosophy was the official ideology at universities in Germany.

But when Kant is signified as the one who opened up the way to Romanticism, a more particular influence is meant. It is mainly because a revolutionary relation between aesthetics and philosophy had been established in Kant that the transition to Romanticism was possible.

Not surprisingly, he was the philosopher who provoked the Romantics the most and has been criticized most severely. It was mainly Kant's three dualistic projections found in his trilogy, namely *Critique of Pure Reason, Critique of Practical Reason* and *Critique of Judgment*, which were at the center of the Romantic critique of Kant: Respectively the duality between freedom versus natural law, the conflict between sensibility versus moral judgment, and the tension between

beauty and the sublime. The presentation of these problems in Kant's *Transcendental Idealism* should be helpful to understand both the evaluation of the questions by Fichte and Schiller and the philosophical development of the Romantics.

Freedom versus Natural Law

Transcendental Idealism can be considered as one of the broadest projects in the history of philosophy. Beiser (2000) suggests a very general explanation of Kantian thought which could function as the starting point of any study on Kant: "Kant's fundamental perspective of transcendental idealism could be explained in two doctrines: the distinction between appearances and things in themselves, and the argument that we know things only as appearances but not things in themselves" (p. 24).

For Kant it is impossible to ascertain whether the cognitive powers of the human subject can represent things as they really are. Since we do not create the objects of our cognition, we can only know the external world if and only if it corresponds to our cognitive faculties. The conclusion is that we know objects only as they appear to us. Therefore it is necessary to distinguish between the thing as it is represented by intuition and the thing in itself. The thing in itself is not accessible by the human faculties and signifies the limits of human knowledge (Seyhan, 1992).

Kant's distinction between appearances and things in themselves leads us to the problem of total representation. Kant (2003) thinks that the idea and its sensible representation are incompatible, since the relation between the symbol and the symbolized is unstable. Therefore only indirect representation is legitimate, which Kant calls *symbolic representation*. Though it reconfirms the limits of our cognitive

powers, it does not make the information provided by our sense data unreliable; hence the subject should still be concerned with nature. But although Kant argued that everything in nature must correspond to universal laws, he limits nature to the realm of appearances and refuses that laws of nature apply to things in themselves.

As Seyhan (1992) has shown, Kant thought to ensure the autonomy of reason and the freedom of man from the determination of nature and history, but at the same time he wanted to secure the existence of the external world. This twofold goal can be understood as the main achievement of the Kantian system which is distinguished severely from older versions of Idealism. In *Prologomena*, Kant distinguishes Transcendental Idealism from extreme versions of Idealism. Richards (2002) quotes from Kant: "The existence of things, that which appears, is not destroyed as in real idealism, rather it is only shown that we cannot know anything about them, insofar as they are things in themselves, through the senses" (p. 63).

What makes Kant's philosophy not only different, but also revolutionary is that his main concern is the autonomy and freedom of man. Kant subordinated the reality of the outside world to the independent reasoning activity of the subject, and his subject occupies a privileged position in relation to the object of the world. Also young Novalis praised Kant's Copernican revolution, as the quotation of him by Seyhan (1992) clearly shows: "Kant places the firm, resting, legislative power a priori in us –the older philosophers placed it outside ourselves. In this way, he validated the counter position in philosophy –as in astronomy" (p. 25).

Kant secured the existence of objective and subjective realms by isolating each in very dualistic terms, which is the main source for the other dualisms in his moral and aesthetic philosophy. Especially the reconciliation of the causal determination of nature with human freedom and the unification of the subject in

theoretical and practical thought became the driving problematic for the post-Kantian thought, and was Fichte's lasting concern (Richards, 2002).

Of course, Kant was also aware of some problems caused by his dualism. Let us examine how Kant himself tried to explain the relation of causal determination of nature with human freedom in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

According to Kant, natural law orders that one part of the objective world is conditioned by another and this fact is exposed with the distinction of a series of conditioned and condition relations in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Does this series go to infinity or is there an unconditioned first member, a first event in time? In the first case, the series is incomplete because the conditioned existence is not explained; in the second case a necessary law of nature is violated since a first member is assumed. There must be a first member, but there cannot be (Kant, 2003). This contradiction is the source of Kantian antinomies.

Kant's solution for this antinomy is to make use of the distinction between mathematical and dynamical principles. Mathematical principles are unconditionally necessary, they are apodictic; on the other hand dynamical principles possess a priori necessity, but only under empirical conditions and therefore they are mediated (Kant, 2003). In this sense we can say that mathematical principles are constitutive, dynamical ones are regulative.

This distinction is parallel with Kant's distinction of nature and the world. Whereas the world signifies the mathematical totality of all appearances, nature signifies the dynamical whole, which is not concerned with a priori conditions of space and time, but with existence and causal relations. Kant (2003) relates mathematical relations with cosmic concepts (great small etc.), and dynamical principals with transcendental concepts of nature.

In this framework, the argument for the solution of the antinomies goes like this: In the mathematical conception of the series of appearances only a sensible condition is possible. The series is homogeneous, because mathematical regress is concerned with combining parts and there is no place for the entities that are not a part of the series. But the dynamical series of sensible conditions is heterogeneous, and dynamical principles allow conditions for appearances outside of the series. Appearances can be related both to sensible and intellectual conditions: Both understanding and reason can act together in dynamical series harmoniously.

In this way, what seemed as a contradiction in the antinomies is resolved. Both assumptions are true: In the sensible world, where everything is empirically conditioned, there may be also an unconditioned necessary being as the condition of the series, which does not belong to the series itself. This cause as a regulative principle, which is the purely transcendental cause for the sensible series and appearances, is compatible with the never ending regress of the empirical conditions, of appearances. What is more interesting is how Kant introduces the concept of freedom related to his distinction.

Kant (2003) accepts the theorem that "everything which happens has a cause" as a law of nature and understanding, but he also would like to have the freedom and independency of reason as compatible with this law. The same distinction and strategy applies to this problem. Reason should be related both to the appearances and the thing in itself. It is related with the thing in itself, it is pure intellect and hence able to begin a new series in the positive sense, but it should have also causality in nature and being connected to the law of nature, in order to be able to affect the world of appearances. Causality is in this sense both an empirical and

intellectual principle. And the reason applies both to appearances and to things in themselves.

It is very important that freedom of reason is not defined negatively, as independency of empirical conditions. Its freedom is its capacity and efficacy to begin a new series. We should keep in mind that nothing begins in reason itself, reason can begin a series in the world of appearances. This idea has a great implication on our conception of humanity and human action: The agent might have acted otherwise. This principle of Kant is directly derived from the assumptions above. In order to explain the human condition, going back in the series and exploring the empirical conditions is not sufficient by itself. We are able to hold the agent responsible for his/her actions and for his/her history, because the reason has the capacity to begin a new series, a new life. This is a given capacity of reason, which is shared by every individual. The imperative and the "ought" is derived from the possibility of voluntary action, and this became the basic idea of Kant's moral theory.

Morality versus Sensibility

Kant started his project considering morality by distinguishing ethics from practical anthropology, which he defined as the study of subjective conditions in man that hinder or help people to fulfill the laws of morality. Principles of ethics in contrast should be derived directly from pure practical reason and have an absolute objective basis. This leads us to the Kantian contrast between duty and inclination and raises the question of whether rational consistency denies notions like love, sympathy etc.

In his work the *Foundation of Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant makes the distinction between pure morality and a mixed doctrine of morals. A mixed doctrine of morals is that first principles are mixed with feelings like pleasure, love, pain, fear etc. But at the same time Kant (1989) claims that it is necessary for a feeling of pleasure to accompany the prescription of duty if moral agents are to fulfill their obligations. What is then the moving force in morality? Is it a moral feeling, or the formal principle?

In the *Foundation of Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant (1989) states that good will is good in itself and a moral action is not done for an advantage, but just for the belief that this action is morally right, in Kant's words for the sake of duty. In this respect, the distinction between the categories of *for the sake of duty* and *in conformity with duty* plays a great role. The distinction between legality and morality corresponds to the distinction between an action done in conformity with duty and one done for the sake of duty: If legality is based on law, morality can be grasped as the spirit of the law. Legality is hypothetical and morality is categorical.

Kant (1989) argues that what is essential in the moral worth of actions is that the moral law should directly determine the will. But it is interesting how in the following pages he consciously jumps over the question of how the law becomes a direct drive. According to Kant (1989), our task is:

> …to determine in what way the moral law becomes the drive and to see what happens to the human faculty of desire as a consequence of this motive. For how a law in itself can be the direct motive of the will is an insoluble problem for the human reason. It is identical with the problem of how a free will is possible. Therefore we shall not have to show a priori the source form which the moral law supplies a drive but rather what it effects in the mind, so far as it is a drive (p. 76-77).

The effect of the moral law as a drive is negative according to Kant (1989). The moral law thwarts our inclinations and produces thereby the feeling of pain. This

feeling is called humiliation according to Kant (1989): “The negative effect on feeling is like all influence on feeling and every feeling is itself pathological” (p. 77).

But Kant (1989) argues the law is in itself positive, because it is the form of freedom and it is at the same time an object of greatest respect and thus the ground of a positive feeling which is not an empirical origin: “This feeling then is one which can be known a priori. Respect for the moral law, therefore is a feeling produced by an intellectual cause and this feeling is the only one which we can know completely a priori and the necessity of which we can discern” (p. 77).

The same idea is also present in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (Kant, 1999): “Though respect is a feeling, it is not one received through any other influence but is self wrought by a rational concept; thus it differs specifically from all feelings of the former kind which may be referred to inclination or fear” (p. 17).

In the *Foundation of Metaphysics of Morals*, respect is portrayed as a self produced feeling, as opposed to one received from external stimuli. Immediacy of respect distinguishes it from others. Here, the feeling of respect is given a special status, but not clearly distinguished from other feelings. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the specific incentive is distinguished from contingent ones more explicitly. Let us focus on the characteristics of the moral feeling as pictured in the *Critique of Judgment*.

We may say that only through some feelings is it possible for human agents to be obligated. We can never do our duty unless we desire to do it. This problem becomes clear in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant’s solution is to make a distinction between the objective and subjective determination of the will by a feeling of respect. The moral law controls subjective feelings by means of duty objectively, and by means of the feeling of respect subjectively. The moral function

of respect is represented as to control the will when there are heteronymous factors influencing the agent to act contrary to duty.

The main difference of moral feeling from fear, pain and self love is that its condition is sensuous feeling but its cause lies in pure practical reason. It is not received by means of influence like love and pain, but it is self wrought by means of a rational concept. What is important is that the respect is the effect of the law on the subject; it is not the cause of the law. Kant argues (1999): "The direct determination of the will by law and the consciousness of this determination is respect; thus respect can be regarded as the effect of the law on the subject and not as the cause of the law" (p. 17).

If it was grasped as the cause, morality would loose its pure character. In other words, the feeling of respect is not prior to duty to moral law, it accompanies duty, i.e., it belongs to duty. Why we need the feeling of respect here is that we can only be conscious of duty if it has an effect on our sensible nature, which is the feeling of respect. When my duty is in conflict with my sensible desires, there arises the feeling of respect. We may translate this definition of Kant, as the feeling of respect is the consciousness of duty: *X is my duty* is the feeling of respect. In this sense, respect only appears within moral actions and thus it is *the* moral feeling. I would become indifferent to moral inner duty, if lost my feelings.

At that point, the difference between the conceptions of respect in the two main works becomes clearer. In the *Foundation of Metaphysics of Morals*, moral feeling is an effect of pure practical reason on subjective feeling. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, feeling of respect is a special feeling, the only one that we can apprehend as a priori.

Kant does not deny that we have motives influencing our actions which are legitimate and compatible with our freedom. But these precede the thought of the law, whereas moral feeling can only follow from the thought of the law. For example, experiencing a subjective need will produce pleasure but only indirectly through success in bringing an object of desire into existence. This is called as the lower faculty of desire. The faculty of desire whose object can be represented only by pure reason is the higher faculty of desire. Kant criticizes Epicurus who he thinks is equating morality with pleasure. Contentment, pleasure and desire are pathological when they arise as the cause of our actions and precede the representation of the law. But according to Kant (1999), there is also a legitimate kind of contentment, compatible with the moral law, which follows the satisfaction of rational desire and is produced by rational antecedents instead of external and heteronymous conditions. The contentment when solving a problem in mathematics and also in doing philosophy can be examples of that rational desire, because it follows the law, i.e., it is pleasure in the law.

Cannot one act both out of sympathy and out of respect? Kant (1989) argues that it is a very beautiful thing to do good to human beings because of love and sympathetic good will, but he adds that this is not yet the genuine moral maxim of conduct. But why should sympathetic good enter the moral maxim, if sympathy can be defined as sharing the other agent's state of being? We saw that Kant (1989) believes that we respect people not because people are morally good, but because they have the capacity and through their capacity they represent the moral law: "All respect for a person is only respect fort he law of which the person provides an example" (p. 17) and "because we see the improvements of our talents as a duty, we

think of a person of talent as the example of a law, as it were and that constitutes our respect" (p. 18).

But how could respect be something which applies to all persons? Do we not also think that persons can either deserve or fail to deserve our respect? The denial of feelings and wants is a denial of what is personal and special in one's life. How can one then be treated as an end in himself? How can one then be different among others?

All these questions could be defined as being romantic in character and they also bring Kant's important notions of autonomy and freedom under question.

Kant assumes that people have a certain independence from each other. Morality is conceived as an individual, even as a private affair between a person and his conscience. Respect for others is a form of non interference in the lives of others. In this sense, one is free to pursue his own ends without the interference of others and the concept of duty comes out as a negative concept, which rules out even the possibility of subjectivity. Kant's supposition that the person is nothing but a logical subject of rational acts supports this thesis.

In the following chapters it will be shown that this critique of the individualistic characteristics of morality and the denial of the role of sensibility in Kantian ethics will be the starting point of the Romantic conception of moral theory.

As it was claimed above, it was Kant's philosophy of aesthetics which particularly influenced the Romantic School. Beiser (2003) summarizes the positive and the negative influences of Kantian aesthetics on the Romantics:

> Kant's doctrine of the autonomy of art, his concept of an organism, his idea of the finality of nature, his definition of genius, and his suggestion that beauty is the symbol for morality were all crucial in one way or another for most young romantics… Kant's denial of the cognitive status of aesthetic judgment, his insistence that aesthetic experience consists only in a feeling of pleasure, and his general restriction of knowledge to appearances posed serious obstacles to the development of romantic aesthetic (p. 79).

Let us focus on these aspects which relate Kant to the Romantic School.

As Richards (2002) argues, Kant obviously intended to identify the transcendental Ego with the moral will, but the *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason* do not offer a reasonable argument for their union. Kant (1790) was aware of this gap between the pure and the practical conceptions of reason, and he introduced the *Critique of Judgment* as a mediating basis between the two: "Now comes judgment, which in the order of our cognitive faculties forms a middle term between understanding and reason."

The first premise of Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* is that aesthetic reflection must be based on empirical experience, since otherwise it would reintroduce the norms of dogmatic metaphysics and a manner of a priori judgment which Kant cannot accept. On the other hand, if aesthetic judgment were to be considered entirely as a subjective matter, Kant would have been close to Hume and therefore in danger of undermining the argument for pure reason (Riou, 2004). In search of a middle position for the aesthetic judgment, as Hammermeister (2002) quotes, Kant makes it perfectly clear that the aesthetic judgment shares "almost"

nothing with the rational judgment and that art therefore has the capacity to teach us anything.

> In order to discern whether something is beautiful or not, we do not submit its representation to the faculty of understanding for cognition, rather we relate it by means of the imagination (possibly connected to understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure and displeasure. The judgment of taste is therefore no cognitive judgment, hence not logical, but aesthetic, meaning that whose determining ground can only be subjective (p. 28).

If it is related to sensibility and feeling, rather than understanding and reason, how can Kant claim universality for the subjective aesthetic judgment? Riou (2004) argues that the secret weapon of this confusing question is the Kantian notion of imagination; defined as "the productive faculty of cognition" and "creator of arbitrary forms of possible intuition" (Seyhan, 1992).

Imagination

The unique nature of aesthetic pleasure can be found in the free play of our cognitive faculties (Hammermeister, 2002). Our understanding and imagination are set in *free play* by the purposive harmony exhibited by the object, in which the imagination delivers information directly to the understanding without arriving there (Riou, 2004). The product of this *quickening of faculties* is an aesthetic feeling which allows us to call the object beautiful. The aesthetic judgment is made according to a feeling, but since the feeling is derived from the universal structure of our cognitive faculties, the same experience can be found in every rational human being. Riou (2004) points out that the product of this free play is necessarily rational: "While the imagination gleams an insight into immeasurable, this has to be somehow capable of being

rationally processed if it is to be mad tolerable. Otherwise rationality itself would have to acknowledge a limit" (p. 61).

Kant makes it clear, that the aesthetic idea is a representation to which no concept is available. One consequence is that it cannot be completely accessed and made intelligible by language. But it is the imagination which makes aesthetic judgments universally communicable, by synthesizing intuition and understanding to link representations without being conceptualized (Seyhan, 1992). Kant (1790) wrote:

> If … imagination (as the faculty of intuitions a priori) is undesignedly brought into accord with understanding (as the faculty of concepts), by means of a given representation, and a feeling of pleasure is thereby aroused, then the object must be regarded as final for the reflective judgment. A judgment of this kind is an aesthetic judgment upon the finality of the object, which does not depend upon any present concept of the object, and does not provide one.

Seyhan (1992) points out the special characteristics of imagination:

> Imagination can go beyond all concepts of an object because it is profoundly capable of "creating another nature from the material that real nature gives it". Furthermore imagination forms the source of symbolic representations which relate "aesthetic ideas" to the ideas of reason in an inverse fashion. The aesthetic idea is a representation to which no concept is adequate. Consequently "it cannot be completely accessed and made intelligible by language". In the romantic translation of this view, the aesthetic idea is embodied in the "potentiated" language of poetry and denotes language to the second power that is a language that expresses what is inexpressible in the rational idea (p. 30).

This free creativity through imagination is practiced by the genius to create works of art. According to Kant (1790) the fine arts must necessarily be regarded as arts of genius and "genius is the talent (natural endowment) which gives the rule to art. Since talent, as an innate productive faculty of the artist, belongs itself to nature, we may put it this way: Genius is the innate mental aptitude *(ingenium)* through which nature gives the rule to art."

The Kantian definition of genius and artistic production suggested to Kant's followers, especially to Fichte and the Romantics, a revolutionary unity of physical determinism and human freedom (Richards, 2002). Kant's artist is both passive and active: He or she is the creator of the art work, but he or she is not able to conceptualize or determine the rules of beauty consciously, he or she creates these objects according to inarticulable laws which express themselves freely in and through the feelings of the genius. We will see that Kant's definition of the genius is almost identical with the Romantic conception of the artist.

Beauty is not an intrinsic and ontological quality of the objects of art, but it is given to the object by the creative activity of the subject. In this picture Kant reversed the traditional comprehension of art work by saving objects of art from being grasped as mystical idols, but he mystified the subjective artistic production instead. The role of the artist is way different from the function of the natural researcher, also from the art critic. Richards (2002) argues: "The art critic judges a painting to be purposive, but cannot specify the plan or the rules by which beauty has been produced. This difference implies that only the artist and not the biologist (or other natural researcher) can be a genius" (p. 71).

Kant's free creativity of the artist will be transformed by Fichte to understand how the Ego could not only act freely but also create a world. As we will examine more deeply, Fichte compared this creative action of the absolute Ego to the productive activity of the artist's imagination (Richards 2002). Fichte also based his epistemology on the grounds of Kantian aesthetics, since according to him, the source of our knowledge and consciousnesses of things do not stream out of objects, but out of the subject. The external world belongs to the subject, like the work of art belongs to the artist.

Aesthetic Judgment

Interestingly for Kant most aesthetic judgments are not about art, but about nature. Namely they are about beauty in natural objects and also about our experience of the sublime (Hammermeister, 2002). Actually Kant is very clear in subordinating the *experience of beauty* to the *experience of the sublime*. Let us focus on the Kantian distinction between *beauty* and the *sublime*.

Seyhan (1992) summarizes the tension between two kinds of aesthetic judgments: "In the judgment of the beautiful reason plays no role. Only imagination and understanding interface. In the judgment of the sublime, however, the pleasure generated by the freedom of imagination turns to pain by the force that strains the limits of imagination" (p. 30).

In judging a thing as beautiful, the faculty of judgment relates the imagination in its free play to understanding. But in judging a thing as sublime, the same faculty relates to reason to produce a state of mind which conforms to the ideas of reason brought by the influence of the feeling of the sublime. While both types of experience are subjective in origin, only the experience of the sublime offers an insight into the rational functions of the subject (Riou, 2004).

In order to differentiate the special status of the *pleasure in beauty* as a subjective feeling, Kant (1790) differentiates three types of pleasures and places the pleasure in beauty at the top among them. *Pleasure of the agreeable* is purely subjective since it is only concerned with the gratification of man's sensible desires. *Pleasure in good* on the other hand is non subjective, since the concept of the good demands universality, but it also demands existence and reality. *Aesthetic pleasure* is

not interested in the existence of its object and it also demands subjective universality, which makes it superior.

Kant also contrasts two types of beauty, which plays an important role by distinguishing art works from natural beauty. According to Kant, as Hammermeister (2002) points out, free beauty "does not presuppose any concept of what the object is meant to be", but the adherent beauty "presupposes such concept and the perfection of the object according to it" (p. 26). Examples of free beauty are flowers, drawings *a la grecque*, all music without text etc. Examples of adherent beauty are purposive like the beauty of a horse, a building, human figure etc. But in what way is a building purposive? Kant shows that in order to find an architectural object or the body of man beautiful, we need to connect the object to a concept of its purpose in the world, to its *telos*, and hence to a sense of its *usefullness*. In this perspective, the judgment of free beauty is pure, that of adherent beauty is an applied, impure judgment (Hammermeister, 2002). But it is important to add that Kant does not want to classify objects according to their type of beauty, but only the judgments regarding these objects.[3]

Similarly, the sublime which is defined by Kant as "which is absolutely great" and "great beyond all comparison", is not a quality of the object but a response of the subject. In other words, as Hammermeister (2002) puts it, "there are

[3] Another influence of Kant on the Romantics is his attempt to compare organisms and aesthetic objects. Organisms and aesthetic objects both exemplify purposiveness in their construction since their parts stand in reciprocal relation to one another. Kant is aware that such purposiveness could not arise by accident (Richards, 2002).

According to Kant (1790), as he suggests in paragraph sixty five of the *Critique of Judgment*, the concept of an organism involves two essential elements, that the idea of the whole precedes its parts and makes them possible, and that the parts are reciprocally the cause and effect of one another. Beiser (2003) points out how Novalis departs from this Kantian argument: "Since in an organism the whole is inseparable from each of its parts, it follows that the work of the artist, as one part of nature, will reflect all of nature, in other words, it will be, as Novalis liked to put it, a 'microcosm' of the universe" (p. 86).

no sublime objects, but only sublime states of subjectivity brought about by encounters with certain classes of objects" (p. 33).

Kant (1790) argues in paragraph twenty seven of *Critique of Judgment* that "the sublime, in the strict sense of the word, cannot be contained in any sensuous form, but rather concerns ideas of reason". The feeling of the sublime is produced when imagination should deal with the formless or the unbounded in nature. Imagination is not able to synthesize the sensual manifold of an absolute great object into a unity. The awareness of the unrepresentability of the rational idea forces us subjectively to grasp nature in its totality as a representation of something supersensible, but at the same time it signifies that we are not able to realize this representation of the supersensible objectively (Seyhan, 1992). Kant (1790) wrote: "The sublime is that, the mere capacity of thinking which evidences a faculty of mind transcending every standard of sense."

There are two types of the sublime. The mathematical sublime corresponds to the boundlessness of magnitude and the idea of infinity. Our imagination does not allow us to think a totality, because every sum of units can be enlarged. For example, we can think of any space as expandable. This experience of infinity puts man into a sense of elevation. The dynamic sublime on the other hand is related to the boundlessness of power. We experience nature as a source of fear, as a force stronger than us (Hammermeister, 2002). Kant's examples for the sources of the experience of the sublime are lightning, volcanoes, big rocks, natural disasters etc.[4] Our first response to such a situation is displeasure because we feel subject to the destructive forces of nature.

[4] Despite beauty's power to quicken our faculties, its distinguishing characteristic is that it calms us. In contrast to the sublime, it is at the same time profoundly moving and deeply satisfying, stirring and quieting. This twofold characteristic of beauty attracted mainly Friedrich Schiller as it will be argued in the next chapter.

However it does not merely signify the limits and despair of humankind, on the contrary, we discover the "power of resistance" and that human freedom is not subject to natural destruction when we experience the sublime in nature. Kant (1790) argued:

> The recognition of our physical helplessness as beings of nature, but at the same time reveals a faculty of estimating ourselves as independent of nature, and discovers a pre-eminence above nature that is the foundation of a self preservation of quite another kind from that which may be assailed and brought into danger by external nature. This saves humanity in our own person from humiliation, even though as mortal men we have to submit to external violence.

In this sense, what produces the pleasure in the experience of the sublime is not the fear or the despair, but our feeling of freedom from nature. In this way, the experience of the sublime is very similar to the moral experience and thus more valuable than the pleasure in beauty (Hammermeister, 2002).[5] Kant (1790) clearly described in what sense the sublime resembles the moral:

> As a matter of fact, a feeling for the sublime in nature is hardly thinkable unless in association with an attitude of mind resembling the moral. And though, like that feeling, the immediate pleasure in the beautiful in nature presupposes and cultivates a certain liberality of thought, i.e., makes our delight independent of any mere enjoyment of sense, still it represents freedom rather as in play than as exercising a law-ordained function, which is the genuine characteristic of human morality, where reason has to impose its dominion upon sensibility.

Hammermeister (2002) pointed out that the opposition between beauty and the sublime in Kant's aesthetics put Schiller, Schelling and Hegel to a lot of trouble:

> The sublime experience is the triumph of the supersensory part of the self over the material and finite part. While beauty rests on the basis of sensory experience, sublimity aims at abandoning the sensory and moving toward reason. Beauty and sublimity therefore have very little in common; in fact, they are opposed to each other. Schiller, as well as idealists Schelling and Hegel, will attempt to overcome this opposition because they argue that without a unification of beauty and sublimity, the self will remain divided between sensibility and morality. In Kant's aesthetics, however, these two experiences stand problematically unconnected (p. 34).

[5] Kant's explanation of the sublime echoes Schlegel's important notion of chaos, which can be defined as the unrepresentable infinity beyond sensibility.

For Kant, as pictured, the beauty of nature always surpasses the beauty of art, because it is the product of immediate interest, whereas artistic products always mediate between their subject matter and the recipient. Therefore Kant believes that a work of art should be similar to a product of nature, meaning the final artistic product is supposed to look uncontrived, natural and effortless, instead of imitating previous works of art (Hammermeister, 2002).

Morality versus Aesthetics

The aim of Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* is to establish art and beauty not as subordinate to our judgments of truth and morality, but as independent of both. Kant stresses clearly that the pleasure of beauty is completely disinterested, isolated from all forms of moral and physical ends. We do not consider whether it conforms to moral purposes or not, when we experience an object as beautiful. The basic reason for this is that moral and aesthetic judgments belong to different categories, because the aesthetic judgment is non-conceptual and of merely subjective universality, whereas the moral judgment relies upon concepts and is of objective universality. When we claim subjective universality for an aesthetic judgment, we mean that it is not purely subjective, but it lays claim to a universal delight.

The argument goes like this: Universality can only be achieved by means of concepts. Only understanding can provide concepts. But aesthetic judgment never moves from imagination to understanding, therefore it is non-conceptual. The

conclusion is that it cannot be universal.[6] What is then the source of the universality of aesthetic judgments?

Kant seems to have uncovered a logical similarity between aesthetic judgment and moral judgment in the same *Critique of Judgment*, in the famous paragraph fifty nine. In order to explain the universality of the aesthetic feeling Kant (1790) claims that "beauty hints symbolically at morality". This cryptic phrase needs explanation. According to Kant, the morally good is such a non-sensory idea which escapes any kind of sensual representation. At the same time, the impossibility of bringing the aesthetic idea under a concept, its non-conceptual characteristic symbolizes the indemonstrability of morality. Thus beauty hints symbolically at morality.

Although this phrase does not represent the central ideas presented in the *Critique of Judgment* and seems to have a problematic relationship with the rest of the work of Kant, there are some other ideas which support the thesis that Kant's aesthetics is loaded with the possibility of being moralized.

In paragraph forty four of the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant (1790) argues that fine art functions also as a tool developing social communication: "Fine art, on the other hand, is a mode of representation which is intrinsically final, and which, although devoid of an end, has the effect of advancing the culture of the mental powers in the interests of social communication."

It will be Schiller who radicalized this thesis by claiming that it is the communicative nature of *judgment of taste* which unites individuals with society. Also Fichte claimed a similar power within the universality of the aesthetic judgment, arguing that the artistic inspiration expands the individuality of the artist

[6] Kant (1790) argues that though we always fail to do so, we attempt endlessly to subsume the unity of the manifold under a concept. This procedure of infinite striving should have influenced Fichte and the romantics.

into a collective disposition so that in turn the work of art unites individual men and women into a community (Hammermeister, 2002).

At the end, we can return to the problem of the unification of freedom and natural law that we discussed in the first section of our Kant chapter. What attracted Fichte and the romantics was how Kant united freedom and natural law in the *Critique of Judgment*. Richards wrote that Kant introduced a new understanding in the *Critique of Judgment*:

> If nature and her law seem to have been constructed with us in mind, then we might have, in this analysis, a way of understanding how the human agent can act freely in an apparently determined world –the world appears designed to accommodate our self-legislative act (p. 71).

Richards (2002) points out that Fichte and Schelling considered Kant's aesthetic judgment as providing a model for self-legislation, which is the basic meaning of freedom according to the laws of the artists' own nature. Artistic production might indicate how our moral actions could have an outcome through a causally determinate human nature which accommodates free action. And with the Romantics, moral actions became modeled on aesthetic acts, and morality itself became aestheticized.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROOTS OF ROMANTICISM: FICHTE AND SCHILLER

"The woman asked: Doesn't he at least believe in the existence of his wife? No? And Madame Fichte puts up with this?"

Heinrich Heine

Between Kant and Fichte

Just after the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, scholars in Germany started to introduce their solutions for the problems of Kantian philosophy enumerated above. The leading figures of the epoch were Maimon, Schulze, Reinhold and Jacobi. All of them claimed to be Kantians and their aim was to complete the Kantian philosophy. Clearly it was Fichte who for the first time attempted to redefine the Kantian framework and tried to systematize a new way of philosophizing; but the early post-Kantian figures from 1785 to 1794 are still important, since their critique of Kant led the way to Fichte and the romantics were acquainted with Kantian philosophy and its problems for the first time through these figures.

Although Transcendental Idealism aimed at defeating skepticism, Kant's perspective was also the object of skeptical criticism. The main skeptic figure of the era was Maimon. Beiser (2002) claims that the essence of Maimon's critique is the claim that Kant cannot answer the question "how do a priori concepts apply to experience if they do not derive from it?" because of his dualism between understanding and sensibility. One of the main projects of Kant was to bring our intuitions under concepts, since he claimed that concepts without intuitions are

empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. But if concepts originate a priori in the understanding, and if intuitions come a posteriori from sensibility, then how can these concepts apply to the intuitions? Beiser (2002) answers: "Understanding is a purely intellectual faculty, which is active and beyond time and space; and sensibility is a strictly empirical faculty, which is passive and within space and time. But if these faculties are so unlike, how do they interact with one another?" (p. 250).

With these questions in mind, Maimon concluded that the whole realm of experience of Kant is an illusion, because Kantian philosophy lacks the bridge which makes the transition from the transcendental to the particular possible. To defeat Maimon's skepticism, Fichte uses an important conception of Kant. Fichte assumes that the object of experience is created by *imagination*, and postulates that the skeptical problem is solved if there is nothing to the object of experience given prior to its synthesis.

This point was clear to Jacobi, but he found a different source for skepticism in Kant's Transcendental Idealism. Like many religious thinkers, he was provoked by Kant who placed reason instead of faith as the criterion for human knowledge. Millán-Zaibert (2007) quotes from Jacobi: "It is absurd to claim that the foundation of knowledge is a principle that can be known to us, for if we had knowledge of this first principle we would know its cause, and if the first principle has a cause it cannot be a first principle" (p. 55).

For Jacobi, the source of knowledge should be self justified, it can only rest in faith. He inverts the relation between reason and faith and places reason in faith. The knowledge should be certain and therefore it should be immediate. What one grasps with the intellect is not as certain as the claims of faith which are provided by feeling and in no need of mediation, demonstration or approval. But Jacobi does not deny

the role of reason; he thought that the reason functions as an inward looking edifice of faith which helps us to access the divine in us. The first principle should be therefore an act of faith, which is based mainly on feelings and sensations.

Jacobi has been criticized not only by Fichte but especially by F. Schlegel because of his irrationalism. Faith cannot be the source of knowledge since it does not lead us to the reality, but to our own subjectivity, therefore it cannot explain how our beliefs form knowledge. For F. Schlegel Jacobi is not a philosopher, for philosophers are guided by truth. Jacobi departs not from an objective imperative, but from an individual option.[7] Millán-Zaibert (2007) quotes from F. Schlegel: "It's like Don Quixote's flight on the wooden horse. Jacobi too seems to me someone who thought he can never stop moving, always stays where he is" (p. 59).

According to Reinhold, who was another successful student of Kant, the first principle of philosophy should define and secure our representations. As opposed to Kant, his goal was not establishing transcendental conditions of knowledge, but establishing the logical relation between actual knowledge and its cause (Millán-Zaibert, 2007). As the basis and first principle of his philosophy, Reinhold arrived at the fact of consciousness, which he thought did not require any object that was not already a representation. Reinhold's conclusion made the Kantian thing in itself unnecessary. Reinhold focused on the analysis of consciousness in terms of representations, and he called his principle "the proposition of consciousness".

Schulze immediately responded to Reinhold, arguing that the idea of a first principle as the basis of philosophy is absolutely wrong, for there is no way to formulate such a principle without facing skeptical objections (Horstmann, 2000). If the first principle of philosophy is a fact of consciousness; we cannot explain self

[7] Schlegel's critique of Jacobi because of his irrationalism is very important, since it signifies that Schlegel did not accept irrationalism for his standpoint.

consciousness itself and need another principle to explain it. Schulze accused Reinhold of being a nihilist. Beiser (2002) argues:

> If it were indeed the case that there is no reason to assume that the categories apply to our perceptions, then it would be possible that our experience consists in nothing more than the accidental association of distinct impressions. There would then be no basis for the belief in necessary connection, a synthetic unity of our representation, and so no grounds to assume the possibility of objective knowledge. Hence the nihilist scenario raises its ugly head: everything in our experience could be nothing more than a dream of illusion (p. 241-242).

Reinhold responded to Schulze by evaluating his former perspective and claiming that his "proposition of consciousness" was not a first principle, but a fundamental fact of human knowledge. It follows that the starting point of philosophy cannot be a principle but a fact (Millán-Zaibert, 2007). Reinhold concluded that common understanding must work together with reason to produce knowledge. Both assumptions of Reinhold were important. With his *principle of consciousness* he made the subject itself the criterion for truth and reality. And through his reply to Schulze, he brought truth to the level of everyday life and psychology.

Fichte was critical of both positions. He found Schulze's concerns meaningless since he believed that it is not a problem that we cannot get outside our representations to check if they correspond to things in themselves, the very idea of a thing in itself is nonsense. As Beiser (2002) argues, there is no need for a second step to prove the truth of logical claims: "What is logically true for any intellect… is at the same time true in reality and there is no other truth than this" (p. 244). But Fichte also disagreed with Reinhold mainly because he recognized the Kantian principle that representations cannot be basic and given because they are produced by more fundamental activities. According to this critique, our starting point cannot be a "fact of consciousness", but only activities below the level of consciousness. If these activities are conditions of any possible representation, they cannot be

representations themselves. Fichte (1794) wrote: “He [Reinhold] goes considerably further than Descartes, but not far enough; for representation, also is not the essence of the Ego, but merely a particular determination of the Ego.”

Therefore Reinhold’s main mistake was to assume that philosophy must begin from some fact, from something given to consciousness. Fichte thought that we need a real principle, not a formal one, which should explain not only the content of experience as a fact, but also the experience itself, therefore it should not be a part of experience (Beiser, 2002). This principle cannot be the representation as a fact, but the performance of representing, namely the act of consciousness which is the highest synthesis and could be the ground of all other possible synthesis and representations. Richards (2002) wrote: “Fichte’s genius was to see that a fact of consciousness might better be conceived as an act of consciousness –unification would be achieved not by a logical supposition but by an underlying action” (p. 75).

As a conclusion, Beiser (2002) shows, Fichte thought that the moving factor could not be logical, but it should be a practical one, i.e., a moral one, hence Fichte replaced Reinhold’s faculty of representation with the faculty of desire as the fundamental organizing principle of the mind. The final, single universally valid principle of all philosophy lies in the faculty of desire, and more specifically in the self-consciousness of the will through the moral law. We can derive theoretical conclusions from practical premises, or infer how the world is from how it ought to be (Beiser, 2002).

Having analyzed Fichte’s criticism of early post-Kantian philosophy, we may now focus deeply on Fichte’s idealism.

Fichte against Kant and Spinoza

The goal of Fichte's project was the same with Kant: Philosophy must discover the ground of all experience. In order to accomplish this task, Fichte stressed that the object of philosophy necessarily lies outside all experience. But at the same time, Beiser (2002) points out, "a philosophy whose results do not agree with experience is surely false, for it has not fulfilled its promise to deduce the entirety of experience and to explain it on the basis of the necessary action of the intellect" (p. 27). With these two basic claims, Fichte marked that his position was neither mere subjectivism, nor skepticism.

Fichte was not happy at all with the Cartesian solution to this problem. In one of the remarks in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, he argued that we do not think necessarily when we are, but we are necessarily when we think, therefore thinking is not the essence, but merely a particular determination of the Ego. Like Kant, Fichte contrasted his *critical idealism* with *dogmatism*. Whereas dogmatism focuses upon the thing rather than the subject, critical philosophy focuses upon freedom as its starting point and takes the Ego, or *the self* prior to any concept of the *thing*. For Fichte, Spinoza defended the most extreme form of dogmatism. What critical philosophy had to do was to turn Spinoza on its head.[8] Fichte argues (1794):

> In critical philosophy the thing is posited in the Ego, in dogmatic philosophy the Ego in the thing; critical philosophy is, therefore, immanent, because it posits all in the Ego; dogmatism is, on the contrary, transcendent, because it proceeds beyond the Ego. In so far as dogmatism can be logical, Spinozism is its most logical product. If you wish to treat dogmatism from its own stand-point, as should be done, ask it why it assumes a thing in itself without higher ground, whereas it did ask for a higher ground in the case of the Ego. Ask the dogmatist, why do you

[8] Schlegel insisted that it was Fichte who was indeed the dogmatist. He argues that Fichte is not critical, because absolute idealism without realism is mystical. The mystic is certainly no critic (Millán-Zaibert, 2007). We will return to this dilemma in the last chapter.

> accept the thing as absolute, since you would not accept the Ego as absolute?

The subject is understood as activity rather than as substance and being is the activity of the Ego. On the contrary, the dogmatist construes the self merely as a product of things, an accident of the world (Beiser, 2002). Fichte points out that the main dispute is about whether the independence of the thing should be sacrificed to the independence of the self. The fundamental principle of the dogmatist, which is the *thing in itself*, should be rejected since it threatens the independence of the self. Richards (2002) noted: "Since the content of any representation lacked the form of an externally existing object –but indeed had only the form of a representation –we could hardly represent that which existed as non-represented, namely, the thing in itself" (p. 75).

On the other hand, the Non-I in Fichte's philosophy has nothing to do with the Kantian thing in itself, it is something opposed to the *I* which is posited by the same *I*, therefore it is in reach of its subject. The representation and the object which should correspond to it are identical; they are just two different perspectives of the same entity. This identity of ideality and reality is the starting point of critical idealism (Millán-Zaibert, 2007).

This starting point of Fichte was clearly not compatible with the Transcendental Idealism of Kant. For Fichte the major weakness of Kant's philosophy lay in its failure to represent the self to itself. The Kantian self lacks the facility for self-representation, in other words, it lacks a posited consciousness or otherness that can reflect on itself (Seyhan, 1992). This was, Fichte thought, because of Kant's strict subject-object dualism. In order to explain consciousness and self representation we need to posit a self consciousness where subject and object are united. Only with this unity can we stop the infinite regress and reach an absolute

starting point and an unmediated consciousness of the self. Let us start from the beginning, and examine how Fichte constructed his system starting from the first principle of science of knowledge.

Fichte's First Principle

Fichte declares in the first passages of his *Wissenschaftslehre*, that every science must have a fundamental principle, or else it will result in many sciences. The first principle, on the other hand, can only be proven in that science, which is to be the ground of all possible sciences. *Wissenschaftslehre* has absolute totality, and therefore it is the only science which can be completed. All other sciences are infinite, for they do not return to their fundamental principles. Fichte believes that the certainty of a judgment results from its being deducible from another judgment whose certainty is immediate and given. In order to avoid the infinite regress of the transmission of certainty from one judgment to another, Fichte has to show the possibility of a particular judgment that is totally unconditioned (Horstmann, 2000). We need to discover this totally unconditioned first principle grounding all human knowledge, which can be neither proved nor determined, if it is to be an absolutely first principle (Seyhan, 1992).[9] Fichte (1794) points out some characteristics of this first principle:

> Since, nevertheless, it is to be the basis of all certainty, it must be certain in itself, through itself and for the sake of itself. All other propositions will be

[9] Can we claim that Fichte was a foundationalist? Beiser (2002) believes that he was and was not a foundationalist depending on whether one considers his views on practical or theoretical reason. "He rejected foundationalism insofar as its arguments are based on constitutive principles, but he attempted to revive it by basing its arguments on regulative principles" (p. 239). Beiser adds that Fichte remains within the foundationalist tradition if we compare him to Hegel, because Fichte never accepted the Hegelian conception of a system which is self-grounding, rather, he argued that the only guarantee of the truth of a system is its first principles.

> certain, because it can be shown that they are in some respect related to it, but this one must be certain merely because it is related to itself. All other propositions will only have a mediated certainty derived from it, but itself must have immediate certainty. Upon it all knowledge is grounded, without it no knowledge were indeed possible; but itself has its ground in no other knowledge, being, on the contrary, itself the ground of all knowledge. This fundamental principle is absolutely certain; that is, it is certain because it is certain.

According to Fichte (1794), the first principle of *Wissenschaftslehre* is a very basic claim: "The *I* originally posits its own being unconditionally." Fichte argues in a series of logical claims, that if "A is A" is unconditionally certain, then the judgment "*I* am" is unconditionally certain too, because only *I* can be taken to be responsible for the unconditional positing of something as existing. But this is not a first principle yet, since "*I* am" is placed under a condition. What makes then the fact of consciousness possible? The *I* is the product of its own positing activity: *I* must be conceived of as an activity which, in being active, posits its own existence. Horstmann (2000) quotes from Fichte: "I is at the same time the acting and the product of the act, the active and that which is generated by the activity, act and deed are one and the same" (p. 123).

At this point Fichte claims that I is a *Tathandlung* ("deed-act"). *Tathandlung* differs from *Tatsache* ("fact of deed") which was the fundamental principle of Reinhold, for it is logically and ontologically prior to all facts for it ultimately posits or constitutes them. The *I* is a *Tathandlung*, in the sense that it originally posits its own being unconditionally, thus we have an entity here whose very concept includes its existence (Horstmann, 2000). Fichte (1794) wrote: "Even by means of this abstracting reflection, that deed-act, which is not empirical fact of consciousness, can not become fact of consciousness; but by means of this abstracting reflection we may recognize so much: that this deed-act must necessarily be thought as the basis of all consciousness."

The second and the third principles of *Wissenschaftslehre* are derivations of the first principle. Horstmann (2000) argues:

> According to Fichte the I, over and above its positing itself, has the ability to posit unconditionally the Not-I, that is, it has the power, by what Fichte calls "an absolute act", to counter-posit something that is exactly the opposite of, or in opposition to, the I. This act of counter-positing is the object of the second principle. The I is also in the position to posit unconditionally the divisibility of the I and the Not-I. This idea of divisibility is taken to be the third principle (p. 125).

In this third principle of Fichte, Kant's main question of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is answered in a satisfactory manner. Fichte has established a synthesis between the two opposites, the Ego and the Non-Ego by means of the posited divisibility of both. The concept of action, the self-reverting activity of the self, which is only possible through the intellectual intuition of the self-active self, unites the two worlds, the sensible and the intelligible world. In the Kantian terminology, Fichte argues, all intuition is directed to existence; therefore intellectual intuition would be the immediate consciousness of the thing-in-itself. But the intellectual intuition in the *Wissenschaftslehre* does not refer to existence at all, it refers to action. The concept of existence is not a primary concept of Fichte, on the contrary, it is viewed as derivative and hence as a negative concept through opposition to activity. Fichte (1982) declares that "to the idealist, the only positive thing is freedom, existence for him, is a mere negation of the latter" (p. 69).

Freedom and Striving

The self-consciousness of freedom is a necessary condition for the deduction of experience, for the awareness of objective reality. Fichte accepts Kant's definition of freedom as spontaneity, the power of the will to be a free cause, the power to begin a

causal series without being determined by some prior cause (Beiser, 2002). This definition of freedom makes it the first aspect of the self. The will does not depend on any external cause to act. The Ego exists prior to its possible determinations, it can choose to be X, Y or Z. For the self, there is no fixed nature or essence. I am, what I make myself. Beiser (2002) argues: "Who am I really? That is, what am I as an individual? And what is the reason that I am just this one [and no other]? I answer: I am, from the moment I have come to consciousness, that to which I make myself according to freedom, and I am this simply because I so make myself" (p. 277).

The self acts following his conception of the self, the reason for its action is not the cause for the action, but its own end, its own purpose as a rational being and this differentiates it from natural things. In this sense, freedom necessarily requires self-conception, self-consciousness, realizing one's own ends. Freedom is for Fichte both a theoretical and a practical principle, it is the principle that makes the subject ideal and real at the same time. Freedom confirms the identity of subject and object, because it is both self-manifestation and self-determination. In this sense, when we say that the Ego is free, we do not mean it is limitless, for according Fichte a *pure I*, one that would exist unconditionally, i.e., without limits, would be indefinite and unreal. All knowing is limitation, specification and particularization of nature, and in order to know its object, the Ego should also limit itself. Therefore the *I* itself posits the Not-I freely and limits itself by its own activity. Each time the *I* limits itself and hence posits itself as practical, it should face a resistance in the form of *feeling*. It is this resistance, the existence of the feeling which makes the *I* practical and real. Does not this very idea of a *limited I* contradict with Fichte's conception of the absolute Ego which begins the *Wissenschaftslehre*?

Fichte contrasts the *theoretical I* and the *practical I*, but he takes them not as separate entities, but as moments or aspects of the same rational mind. The gap between the *theoretical I* and *practical I* can and should be closed through the moral principle. The *I* which begins the *Wissenschatslehre* is a formal principle being completely indeterminate. But when Fichte (1794) says "the Ego posits itself as all reality" or "the Ego posits itself absolutely", he does not refer to something which exists, he explains, but to something that ought to exist. These phrases express Fichte's demand that everything in the world ought to conform to our rational activity. It is better to say that the self ought to be free, rather than to say that the self is free. With this move, Beiser (2002) thinks that "Fichte made the moral law the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom" (p. 290). This way, Fichte went beyond Kant, by claiming that the activity by which we know objects is directed by the will itself in moral and practical terms. Any constitutive, descriptive principle attempting to derive the world from the Ego would fail, for as we have seen theoretical reason cannot prove the existence of anything. The principle should be a regulative one, a principle which tells us what we ought to do. Lovejoy (1920) argues:

> Fichte had by 1794 converted this Kantian conception of the moral ideal as an endless pursuit of a forever unattainable goal into a metaphysical principle, and had represented the very nature of all existence as an infinite and insatiable striving of the Absolute Ego, whereby it first sets up the external world as an obstacle to its own activity, and then gradually but endlessly triumphs over this obstacle. The notion of infinity thus took precedence in philosophy over that of the finite and determinate, the category of Becoming over that of Being, the ideal of activity over that of achieved completion, the mood of endless longing over that of quietude and collectedness of mind (p. 5).

According to the concept of *striving*, the *absolute Ego* which creates all the objective world, is not real but only ideal, which becomes the goal for the striving of the *real* and *finite Ego*. The finite Ego constantly strives to make nature conform to demands of rational activity, and though the subject never gains complete control over nature,

through its striving, the ideal of the absolute Ego is realized. It is only in striving for freedom that we can prove that we are free. Ideal freedom does not exist; it is only a regulative idea. In this sense, freedom is not given; it is something that we create. We cannot know and claim that we are free prior to our activity of striving for freedom, be become free agents only through our struggle. This infinite striving also becomes the condition of all possible experience, since we can experience the world only as opposed to our activity. The Ego should strive against obstacles in order to realize itself as a self-conscious being; therefore the Ego limits itself freely by its free activity.

Both aspects of the Ego, which it is limited and limitless, finite and infinite at the same time, are derived from the same activity of striving. The Ego is infinite, because it never ceases to strive; there is no definite point in nature which serves as a limit for our striving. But the Ego is finite, since striving has always an obstacle to struggle against, there is always some point in nature which is unconquered (Beiser, 2002). In this way, the Ego has access to both worlds contrary to Kant. Beiser (2000) calls this philosophy ethical idealism for two reasons:[10]

> First, it maintains that the world ought to be ideal, but not that it is so. Idealism thus becomes a goal of our moral activity, our ceaseless striving to make the world conform to the demands of reason. Second, it gives priority to our activity in the production of knowledge, so that we know, and even that we know, depends upon our efforts to conquer nature according to our moral ideals. Fichte went beyond Kant in giving practical reason priority over theoretical reason, for he [Fichte] made the activity of will central to the very foundation of knowledge itself. It was not only the understanding but the will that became the lawgiver of nature (p. 31).

[10] Hegel who insisted on an *objective* rather than merely moral purpose as his starting point, had a very different problem and methodology than Fichte. Beiser (2000) points out this difference: "Where Fichte started with freedom alone and left the internal structure of nature to appear arbitrary, Hegel started with such a global focus on being, nature, and history that it became unclear how freedom in the sense of individual free choice could retain its full meaning" (p. 7).

Fichte did not stop there, but he made practical reason and the activity of the will also prior to the idea of God. According to Kant, Beiser (2002) claims, we have a right to believe in God because it is a necessary condition of our achieving the highest good. This project provoked many, but Fichte's position was much more extreme. Fichte believes that we have the right of having the moral ideas of God and immortality not as objects of belief but only as goals of action. The practical reason does not allow us to believe in the existence of an entity beyond experience, but secures only the right to act according to some ideals. In this picture, belief or faith in God is simply a reflection of one's moral certainty. Richards (2002) wrote:

> Whereas Kant had used [moral experience] as a ground for postulating the practical necessity of belief in a transcendent God, Fichte simply identified God with the moral order of the universe –not an abstract, indefinite order, to be sure, rather the entire free activity of absolute subjectivity, through which individual acts occurred (p. 90).

Fichte also has an archetypal intellect, but it resides in the Ego, not in a postulated God like in Kant (Richards, 2002). Zöller (2002) argues that God or the Absolute in general does not have an existence beyond the practical world of man, their mere idea depends on man: "God and human being, or the absolute and the I, are reciprocal terms. One does not come into play without the other" (p. 206).

This picture was not more innocent than mainstream atheism, and although Fichte, who started his career as a theologian, preserved some idea of God, a non-existing image of God which is secondary to the principle of the self didn't satisfy officials and he lost his job at the university.

Even in the second introduction to *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte differentiated selfhood and individuality. Selfhood is original and basic, and individuality is derived, the Ego is the condition under which we individuate Egos. The Ego exists only in embodied form, and only through its determinations and its relations to other

selves and the outer world. Moreover, the Ego can become self conscious, i.e., it can objectify itself, only as it grasps itself as an individual among others in a society, and if and only if it recognizes the equal status of other free Egos. Fichte (1992) argues:

> I can discover myself to be an object, however, only on one condition: namely, that I discover myself to be one individual among many spiritual beings… my experience begins with a realm of rational beings, to which I myself belong, and everything else follows from this (p. 302-303).

And in order to be able recognize others as free beings; the Ego should limit its freedom by ascribing a free efficacy to other finite rational beings in the sensible world. This becomes the central principle of his concept of *right*, which Fichte claims is deduced a priori, from the pure form of reason, from the *I*. It should be noted, that his concept of right has nothing to do with the moral law, it is opposed to the concept of duty of Kant. Fichte (2000) wrote:

> The deduced concept has nothing to do with the moral law, it is deduced without it, and this fact is enough to prove that it cannot be deduced from the moral law, for there cannot be more than one deduction of the same concept… the concept of duty, which arises from the moral law, is directly opposed to the concept of right in most of its characteristics. The moral law commands duty categorically, the law of right only permits, but never commands, that one exercise his right (p. 50).

The distinction between right and duty is very important, since duty cannot secure the freedom of man and it accepts the equality among rational beings only categorically, the concept of right secures the freedom of man practically and provides the content to the moral law which is formal.

Although the priority of practical reason is secured and the first principle is still valid, as Horstmann (2000) explains, in his ethical theory and theory of natural right Fichte is not so much concerned with the absolute Ego, but focuses rather on what he calls the empirical self-conscious being, which is the person per se. This may also be one of the reasons why the Romantics are not as concerned with Fichte's newer publications than the Wissenschaftslehre of 1794.

Intellectual Intuition as a Ground for Aesthetics?

Although Fichte studied and commented on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, he surprisingly showed little interest in the *Critique of Judgment* and was barely interested in art and artistic production. But still, we will point out two aspects which make him important for the development of aesthetic theory and relate him especially to Schiller and the romantics.

One of his concepts influenced romantic theory no less than his notion of striving, namely the concept of intellectual intuition, which is originally a Kantian one. Fichte referred to the productive awareness of the self in all acts of consciousness as "intellectual intuition". Beiser (2002) quotes from Fichte: "Intellectual intuition is the immediate consciousness that I act, and of what I do when I act. It is because of this that it is possible for me to know something because I do it" (p. 298).

Fichte uses the term *intuition* in a similar manner like Kant, designating an immediate form of representation. An intuition is immediate for it does not require a concept to mediate between itself and the particular object (Beiser, 2002). When *I* choose to think myself to make my *I* the object of my thinking activity, *I* thereby become immediately aware of the *I*'s being nothing other than that activity which is directed toward itself in a self-reflective and self-conscious way (Horstmann, 2000).

Kant argued that man can be aware of empirical objects only through *sensuous intuition* which was simply given to human cognition. But he added that we could imagine another kind of understanding, which cognizes objects but does not require something to be passively received (Richards, 2002). This understanding

would employ intellectual intuition, which in its very cognizing would produce the object. But Kant denied the possibility of such intellectual intuition because of two reasons. First, he thought that all knowledge including self-knowledge is discursive and mediated, requiring the application of concepts. Second, all knowledge is empirical which demands a manifold given to sensation. As Beiser (2002) has shown, the first forbids the immediacy, the second the intellectuality of intellectual intuition.

Contrary to Kant, in Fichte, self-knowledge as acting must be intellectual, because, in acting, I create the object that I know. The immediate awareness of an intellectual activity cannot be the sensible intuition of Kant which presupposes material existence.

The active and creative component of intellectual intuition allows us to compare its function with Kantian imagination, which served as one of the basic elements of Kantian aesthetics. The Romantics equipped their artist or the genius both with Kantian imagination and Fichtean intellectual intuition, since artistic production should reveal the knowledge of the Absolute immediately.[11]

Fichte's second reference to aesthetic theory is his theory of drives, which influenced Schiller deeply and functioned as a model for his theory of drives.

As we have seen, consciousness can be defined as representing the process of representation itself. Self-consciousness is the representation of the self's own activity of representing the sensible world. But what is the force behind the human

[11] To draw the difference between the use of the term by Fichte and the Romantics, Lewis (1962) calls attention to the fact that Fichte attributes the capacity of *intellektuale Anschauung* ("intellectual intuition") to the absolute Ego only, whereas Novalis attributed it also the empirical Ego. The consequences are not small. In Novalis, intellectual intuition became the means through which the individual experiences the union with the absolute divine consciousness. The notion is mystified and used as a synonym for the mystic mood of ecstasy. It should be noted that Fichte never believed that mystic union is attainable, and he did not regard ecstasy as a legitimate state of consciousness.

capacity of representation? The force behind representation should be indeterminable and independent. Fichte introduces his theory of drives as an answer to this question. Beiser (2002) quotes from Fichte: "Drive is the only thing in human beings which is independent and utterly incapable of being determined from outside… This alone transforms us into independent, observing and acting beings" (p. *45*).

There are three drives that are responsible for our representations, namely the cognitive drive, practical drive and aesthetic drive. The cognitive drive aims at knowledge simply for the sake of knowledge. The practical drive, on the other hand, focuses not on the mere knowledge of things as they are, but on the conditions and processes of their production, change and development (Beiser, 2002).

Beiser (2002) shows that these two drives presuppose each other. In the cognitive drive, the representation has to orient itself to the sensible object and in the practical drive, the object needs to agree with the representation: "The third drive concerns itself not with any form of agreement between object and representation but solely with representation for its own sake. The interest of this drive lies not in re-presentation but in the creation of an independent image" (p. 46).

Both the cognitive and the aesthetic drive are responsible for creating representations. Whereas the representation of the first type is in harmony with an object, the aesthetic representation is not subject to any conformity with objects. On the other hand, whereas the practical drive is involved in constructing the object of representation, which is external to the self, the aesthetic drive can only be self-referential. No prior representation is possible because its object is itself a representation. As Beiser (2002) shows:

> It is imagination guided by the aesthetic sense that fulfills the realization of the suprasensible world. In this operation imagination achieves total freedom. It remains in the realm of the aesthetic drive "even when this

> derive deviates from nature and represents forms not as they are but as they ought to be according to the dictates of this drive (p. 47).

The Lost Chain: Friedrich Schiller

"Art is a daughter of Freedom"

Friedrich Schiller

Schiller made the transition from Kantian aesthetics to Romantic aesthetics possible. Schiller was not alone in seeing Kant's division of nature and freedom as part of the problem of modernity, but his solution was unique. He defended that natural desires, intuitions and feelings should not be dominated by the total triumph of reason, but must be cultivated and developed in order to preserve the aesthetic, physical and rational wholeness of human experience.

What made him unique among many others was that he regarded aesthetics and beauty as the prior means to achieve the moral ideal. Kai Hammermeister (2002) argues that in his efforts to unite art and morality, Schiller makes two presuppositions. The first is that the achievement of a moral community transcends individual efforts and becomes a political task in his system. Schiller's second presupposition is that it is impossible to achieve a moral community by direct political action. The only way to build a republic of free and equal members is through the aesthetic education of the whole society. Schiller takes a revolutionary step and argues that the politics of the day is aesthetics, since, he claims, it is through beauty that man arrives at freedom. Schiller's philosophy of aesthetics was shaped upon this moral ideal and therefore his aim was to find an objective principle for art and to overcome Kant's subjectivism. Especially Hegel praised Schiller many times for going beyond Kantian subjectivism. Reginald Snell, who translated Schiller's

(2004) *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters,* wrote in the introduction: "It is Schiller to whom we must give credit for the great service of having broken through the Kantian subjectivity and abstractness of thought, daring to transcend them by intellectually apprehending the principles of unity and reconciliation as the truth, and realizing them in art" (p. 12).

Let us then focus on the two main theories of one of the most underrated philosophers of history.

Schiller's Theory of Drives

Schiller begins his famous work *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, which was published in 1795, with a quotation from Rousseau. This is meaningful, because in the following passages he expresses a similar dissatisfaction with modern times like the great philosopher. Schiller (2004) states his concerns in a very poetic formulation of alienation, which projects us almost an early version of Marx's mood in the 1844 Manuscripts:

> Enjoyment was separated from labor, means from ends, effort from reward. Eternally chained to only one single little fragment of the whole, Man himself grew to be only a fragment, with the monotonous noise of the wheel he drives everlastingly in his ears, he never develops the harmony of his being, and instead of imprinting humanity upon his nature he becomes merely the imprint of his occupation, of his science (p. 40).

In this picture, man is divided between the demands of Reason and Nature. According to Schiller (2004), he is a savage if his feelings rule his principles or a barbarian if his principles destroy his feelings. The savage only respects Nature, and the barbarian dishonors it and becomes a slave of his slave. The modern citizen, who is Kantian in character, cannot escape being a barbarian. What Schiller (2004) idealizes is the cultured man, who unites both positions in his temper, and "makes a

friend of Nature and respects her freedom while merely curbing her caprice" (p. 3). This totality of character is the only way of realizing freedom.

Schiller (2004) is in no way a reactionary, for he does not demand us to returning back to our natural state; he clearly indicates that the wholeness in our nature destroyed by Art is to be restored "by means of a higher Art" (p. 45).

His means of achieving this totality is not reason, since "reason has accomplished all she can, in discovering and expounding Law", it is the task of "courageous will and lively feeling" to execute what reason discovered. If it is our feelings, which will execute this mission, Schiller (2004) declares that "training the sensibility is then the more pressing need of our age, not merely because it will be a means of making the improved understanding effective for living, but for the very reason that it awakens this improvement" (p. 50).

Schiller states that cultivation of individual powers and our sensibility does not necessitate the sacrifice of the totality of our character. On the contrary, it will help us to have control of the two conflicting impulses acting on us.

The first of these impulses, namely the *sensuous impulse*, or *sense drive*, has its roots in man's physical existence and aims for *absolute reality*. It tries to place us within the boundaries of physical time and to transform every form into the sensible world (Schiller, 2004). Man ruled by the sense drive has no personality, because he is the mere result of his constantly changing sensations. His world is given and it is ruled by the rules of nature (Seyhan, 1992). The second impulse, which Schiller calls the *formal impulse*, or the *form drive*, proceeds from man's rationality, aims at freedom and tries to preserve his personality throughout time. It destroys everything which is mere world and conceptualizes every fact of objectivity. The form drive,

unlike the sense drive, cancels all time and change, and hence has no reality. Hammermeister (2002) argues:

> Whereas the sense drive receives sense data, the form drive impresses form on them. It is not the worlds as a material totality that determines the letter but, rather, the spirit. The spirit, however, is not passive but, rather, the principle of activity. The necessity of the form drive is not physical but moral, and it is not subject to the laws of nature, but to those of reason (p. 52).

Man begins his history as mere life and ends with form, he is first an individual and then becomes a person, he should face various limitations on his way to infinity. As opposed to Kant who regarded sensibility as an obstacle to freedom, Schiller's (2004) conclusion is inspiring: "The sense impulse therefore comes into operation earlier than the rational, because sensation precedes consciousness, and in this priority of the sense impulse we find the key to the whole history of human freedom" (p. 98).

But still, as long as one drive rules over the other, humans will be subjected to the conflicting demands of feeling and reason. To keep the balance between the two is the task of the culture, by owing justice to both. Thus it has two duties, "first, to secure the sense faculty against the encroachments of freedom, secondly to secure the personality against the power of sensation" (p. 69). Schiller (2004) isolated the realms of both drives strictly. He argues that feeling should decide nothing in the realm of reason, it is equally necessary that reason should not presume to decide anything in the realm of feeling. Personality should restrict the sense impulse, and sensibility or nature should keep the formal impulse within its boundaries. Schiller claimed that the distance between matter and form, sensation and thought is infinite and they can only be combined by cancellation. There, Schiller introduced a third drive into the game, which he called *play-drive*. The play drive cancels the conflicting demands of the sensible and formal impulses and grounds a mediating

free play of drives. Schiller postulates that the object of this drive is living form, in other words Beauty: "Through Beauty the sensuous man is led to form and to thought, through Beauty the spiritual man is brought back to matter and restored to the world of sense… Beauty transports us into this intermediate condition" (p. 87).

The notion of play signifies the possibility of free representation of nature. The self moved by the play drive is in a free flux of sensible experience, in a state of supreme rest and supreme movement which results in a union of causality and indeterminacy, the rational and the real. Only in a state of play is man able to unify time and atemporality, becoming and being, change and identity. In Schiller's (2004) words, "man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a man, and he is only wholly man when he is playing" (p. 80).

The play drive signifies almost a mystical, ecstatic experience. So long as man is savage and acts according to his sense drive, Schiller explains, he only perceives the object of his touch and enjoys merely with the sense of feeling. But when the play drive is guiding him, he grasps objects through his eyes. The object of the eye and the ear is a form which he creates by himself freely, since the intellect enlightens the objects of experience in this case. In this aesthetic experience guided by the play drive, man finds pleasure in appearances; he positions himself *outside himself* and treats objects with wonder and contemplation. As we will see, this mystified reading of Schiller's mode of play influenced especially Novalis.

With his notion of the play drive, Schiller seems to combine Kant's idea of the free play of faculties and Fichte's theory of drives. But generally, he seems closer to Fichte than Kant. In order to save our feelings from the domination of reason, he rejects the Kantian dualism between sensibility and reason. Schiller (2004) defends that sensibility should no longer be considered as a hindrance to rationality.

> In a transcendental philosophy, where everything depends on freeing form from content and keeping what is necessary clear from everything fortuitous, we too easily become accustomed to think of the material simply as a hindrance, and to represent the sense faculty as necessarily opposed to reason because in this particular matter it stands in our way. Certainly such a mode of thinking is by no means in the spirit of the Kantian system, but it may very well be found in the letter of it (p. 68).

On the other hand, Schiller (2004) quotes Fichte twice and he seems to accept Fichte's distinction of *theoretical Ego* and *practical Ego* entirely:[12]

> Every individual man, it may be said, carries in disposition and determination a pure ideal man within himself, with whose unalterable unit it is the great task of his existence, throughout all his vicissitudes, to harmonize. [In footnote] I may refer at this point to a recently published writing by my friend Fichte: Lectures on the Vocation of the Scholar, where the reader will find some very luminous inferences from this proposition that have never before been attempted along these lines (p. 31).

If we compare Schiller's theory of drives with Fichte's, we see that he only added some slight changes to the former plan. Fichte stated that the cognitive drive and the practical drive must be united through a third aesthetic drive. Schiller takes this basic model, but modifies the conceptions of the three drives, especially of the third one. This is because Fichte's aesthetic drive was mainly concerned with producing free representations, but Schiller was more interested in existence. This difference should become clearer in Schiller's aesthetic theory.

[12] But it should be noted that in one of his letters Schiller expressed to Goethe that he found Fichte's project too abstract and devoid of reality. Richards wrote: "According to Fichte's oral remarks, which do not appear in this book (Wissenschaftslehre) the *I* is creative through its representations, and all of reality is only in the I. The world is for him only a ball, which the *I* has thrown and which it again catches in reflection!! He ought, therefore, to have simply declared his divinity, something we expect any day now" (p. 83).

Schiller's Theory of Aesthetics

Schiller differentiates between four characters of humanity. The first is the physical character; its object is our sensuous condition. The second is the logical character; its object is the reason. The third is the moral character and its object is the will. And the last character is our aesthetic character, its object is the totality of our various powers, none of them is the specific object for it. Thereby, the aim of the aesthetic character is the cultivation all of our sensible and intellectual powers by definition (Beiser, 2003). In parallel to Kant's distinction of *sublime* and *beautiful*, Schiller distinguishes between two modes of beauty, a relaxing and a tightening one, which balance the different characters of man. *Energizing beauty* protects man from softness and enervation, *melting beauty* on the other hand protects him from savagery and harshness. As Schiller (2004) expressed, "melting Beauty was for a taut nature, and energizing Beauty for a relaxed one" (p. 86).

Schiller also accepts the valid judgment in the Kantian logic, that the work of art must attain necessity and universality. But in order to overcome Kant's thesis that beauty belongs to the subjective sphere and it deserves not more than the quality of subjective universality, Schiller develops an objective principle of beauty in terms of epistemology and ontology.

What is really striking is that Schiller violates Kant's strict principle, that aesthetics can never signify any cognitive value; it never and in no way helps us to reveal the truth. In his poem *Die Künstler* ["artists"], which is quoted by Hammermeister (2002), Schiller expresses his philosophical position: "What we here perceived as beauty / Will one day come to us as truth" (p. 43). The same idea is also present in Schiller's (2004) Letters: "There can, in a word, no longer be any question

how he passes from Beauty to Truth, since the latter by its very nature lies within the former" (p. 123). Objectification of beauty makes it the primary faculty of man, which even deserves the status of the second creator after nature: "It is no poetic license, but also philosophical truth, to call Beauty our second creator. For although she only makes humanity possible for us" (p. 102).

This is because there is no other way to make the sensuous man rational than by first making him aesthetic. Schiller argues that man cannot pass directly from sensation to thought; moral condition can be derived only from the aesthetic, not directly from the physical condition. In his physical condition man is ruled by the force of nature, he saves himself from this force in the aesthetic condition and controls nature in the moral condition.

Schiller (2004) thinks that both systems of law of nature and reason should subsist in complete independence, yet in complete accord with one another. This is possible only through beauty in which sensuousness and reason are active at the same time. In this middle position, man is neither the slave of physicality nor of morality, yet he is active in both realms, he is both active and real: "The aesthetic creative impulse is building unawares a third joyous realm of play and of appearance, in which it releases mankind from all the shackles of circumstance and frees him from everything that may be called constraint, whether physical or moral" (p. 137).

This framework can be easily related to Fichte's unity of the real and the ideal. Schiller presupposes that reflection is man's first free relation to the universe which surrounds him. Since we can have a sensation of beauty only under the condition of reflection, beauty is an object for us; but at the same time it is a state of our personality, for we have a conception of beauty only through our feelings. Beauty,

Schiller (2004) explains, is both our state and our act; it reflects both our *being* and our *becoming*.[13]

> With the enjoyment of the Beauty, or aesthetic unity, there occurs a real union and interchange of matter with form, and of passivity with activity, by this very occurrence the compatibility of both natures is proved, the practicability of the infinite in finiteness, and consequently the possibility of a sublime humanity (p. 123).

Contrary to Kant, who argued that beauty is absolutely disinterested in moral terms, Schiller argues that an object is beautiful if and only if it fulfills a particular moral goal, which is freedom. According to Schiller, self-determination is a necessary principle of beauty, i.e., a beautiful object should act according to its inner nature only. The beautiful object thereby exhibits the quality of freedom to our senses, and this makes beauty what Schiller calls *freedom in appearance*. Whereas in Kant beauty hints at morality only symbolically, there is a higher and direct unity of aesthetics and morality in Schiller's picture. Hammermeister (2002) wrote:

> This definition of beauty marks a distinct break with Kant's aesthetics. The principle of beauty as freedom in appearance is no longer a merely subjects response of disinterested pleasure but, rather, precisely that objective principle that Schiller had meant to introduce from the beginning of his aesthetic endeavor (p. 55).

The same idea is present also in *Kallias Letters*, where Schiller claims that beauty is the sensual expression of freedom and points out autonomy as the single most important characteristic of aesthetic representation. A beautiful object is free, for we does not need to look anywhere else to grasp the ground of this object, because it is self-explanatory, as Seyhan (1992) claims, it represents itself as free in intuition. Aesthetic determinacy exclude every determined existence (Schiller, 2004), and in

[13] Hegel interpreted this unity as the unity of knowledge and existence and praised Schiller again for his position. Dahlstrom (2000) wrote: "This unity of universal and particular, freedom and necessity, spirituality and the natural, what Schiller grasped in a scientific way as the principle and essence of art and relentlessly tried to call into actual life through art and aesthetic education, was then made as the idea itself into the principle of knowledge and existence and recognized as what is alone true and actual" (p. 89).

the state of aesthetic freedom, the laws are guiding the mind but they are not realized, because these laws do not meet any resistance and therefore they does not appear as compulsion: “Art must abandon actuality and soar with becoming boldness above necessity, for Art is a daughter of Freedom, and must receive her commission from the needs of spirits, not from exigency of matter” (p. 26).

This perspective allows Beauty to have precedence over freedom, therefore it does not arise from freedom, but it is what gives rise to freedom. Schiller’s (2004) conclusion is revolutionary: “If we are to solve that political problem in practice, follow the path of aesthetics, since it is through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom” (p. 27).

Being disappointed by the results of the French Revolution, Schiller strongly believed that the direct achievement of a moral state is impossible through moral and political means, but requires the achievement of an historical phase through the aesthetic state. In this sense, Schiller thought that the politics of the day is aesthetics. His notion of aesthetics became more and more educational and political; and the scope of his aesthetics became the society instead of the individual.

In his definition of the beautiful work of art, Schiller argues that the content should do nothing and the form everything, for the wholeness of man is affected by the form alone, and only individual powers by the content. The artist has to annihilate the material by means of the form. This enables him not to be the servant of his age, but makes him critical and secure against the corruptions of the period. Schiller (2004) wrote:

> Live with your century but do not be its creature, render to your contemporaries what they need not what they praise. Without sharing their guilt, share with noble resignation their penalties and bow with freedom beneath the yoke which they can as ill dispense with as they can bear it (p. 54).

The artist is the child of his time, who has a responsibility to rescue and preserve the dignity of humanity. Hammermeister (2002) claims that this idea of Schiller is responsible for the common Marxist reception of the work of art: "The work of art is considered reception of the letters, in which the work of art is considered as that which remains unreconciled with reality and, thus, harbors the potential to both negate this reality and keep alive the promise of a better one" (p. 58).

In his inspiring work *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, Schiller (1795d) applies his categories which he developed in the letters to poetry and its historical development and draws political conclusions through historical speculations. Schiller's thesis is that in order to fulfill its *telos*, mankind must become what it promised to be in its naïve childhood stage. His concept of naïve expresses the ancient immediacy of nature and belief, its childlike character, and the concept of the sentimental reflects the mediated state of man who is preoccupied with his own image, with his capacity to understand and remake himself (Schiller, 1795d). Hammermeister (2002) argues:

> Greece that is the naïve and natural state of mankind's development brings forth out of itself art as the negation of nature through reason. And yet art does not simply negate nature, because as it develops nature to its full potential, art allows man the return to nature. This return, or ideal, is the perfection of man brought about by the perfection of art. The ideal bridges the gap between cold reason and unreflective sensibility, or as Schiller will put it, between beautiful form and moral energy (p. 49).

In this model of beauty, which provides the synthesis of freedom and feeling, reason and sensibility, Schiller found the grounds for his moral theory, which he introduced in *Anmut und Würde* ("On Grace and Dignity"). In Kant's moral philosophy which is centered on the idea of duty, moral perfection is blind to material feelings and desires. Schiller (1793a) thought that it is the choice of the weaker mind to suppress his feelings in order to execute dutiful actions. For him, only a harmony between

duty and inclinations can be the basis of the higher moral ideal, since man is only sincere to morality, if and only if he cares whom he respects, if and only if he acts without constraint of a physical need or a moral imperative. In this sense, moral action should be spontaneous; it is both an expression of freedom and feeling. Thus, an element of "grace" accompanies every virtuous action. Schiller adopted Cicero's terminology for his work: Grace ("venustas") signifies the soul's achievement to act morally out of desire, and dignity ("dignitas") signifies man's adherence to the moral principle even in suffering (Hammermeister, 2002). The harmony of freedom and feeling is displayed by an original term, namely the *beautiful soul*. Beiser (2003) argues:

> Schiller puts his ideal of the "beautiful soul", the person whose character is a work of art because all his of her actions exhibit grace. For Schiller a graceful action is one that shows no sign of constraint –whether that of a physical need or a moral imperative- and that reveals the spontaneity and harmony of a person's whole character (p. 96).

With his ideal of the beautiful soul, Schiller gives a very different perspective than Kant on how art is related to moral action. It is not that beautiful works of art influence us to be virtuous, but the achievement of human excellence through virtuous actions produces an aesthetic pleasure identical to the pleasure in creating a beautiful work of art. The stimulant for any moral action is this aesthetic pleasure in exercising the perfection of humanity (Beiser, 2003).

In this sense, it is Beauty which assigns a social character to man. It is only through Beauty that a society made of particular individuals can be achieved, for all other forms of communication divide society, because they relate exclusively either to the private sensibility or to the private rationality of individuals, but Beauty addresses, as Schiller (2004) wrote, both natures of humanity: "It is only Beautiful that we enjoy at the same time as individual and as race, that is, as representatives of

the race" (p. 138). This is also the condition of equality: "Everything in the aesthetic State, even the subservient tool, is a free citizen having equal rights with the noblest, and the intellect, which forcibly moulds the passive multitude to its designs, must here ask for its assent" (p. 140).

As we have seen, Beauty and art execute all the main goals of Enlightenment in Schiller's aesthetic theory: They preserve freedom, they secure equality, they motivate grace and dignity, it confirms the moral law and it constructs the society and the state. We may say that Schiller never refused the goals of the Enlightenment, but he rejected (or modified) the means to achieve these goals. As we will see, this interpretation is almost true for the Romantics, who adopted most of the arguments of Schiller.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROMANTIC ABSOLUTE

On the Meaning of the Term *Romantic*

The origin of the term r*omantic* has been an important debate among scholars. Why, how and when F. Schlegel selected this term to refer to the kind of poetry he wished to glorify still remains a confusing question, though the two major attempts to answer this question were made as long ago as 1870 and 1916 by Rudolf Haym and Arthur O. Lovejoy. I would like to start this chapter by evaluating these two mainstream understandings of the history of the term Romantic.

In short terms, Haym argued that the primary meaning of the term *romantisch* ("romantic") in F. Schlegel's writings between 1797-1800 was *romanartig* ("like a novel") and its source was Goethe's novel Wilhelm Meister (Lovejoy, 1916). Lovejoy (1916) rejected this interpretation and claimed that the conception of Romantic art was formulated before F. Schlegel's acquaintance with Wilhelm Meister; the romantic poetry was simply the *interesante Poesie* ("poetry of interest") of the earlier period. Lovejoy claimed that Wilhelm Meister was not even an example of a romantic work according to F. Schlegel.

One of the main evidences of Haym for claiming that F. Schlegel abstracted the term romantic from Wilhelm Meister is F. Schlegel's (1982) famous fragment from Athenaeum, that the three great tendencies of the age were the "French revolution, Fichte's Theory of Knowledge, and Goethe's Wilhelm Meister" (p. 129). Lovejoy (1916) summarized Haym's thesis:

> According to this explanation, therefore, "romantisch" was to Schlegel equivalent in meaning to "romanartig", it at the same time involved a special reference to Goethe's novel as the archetype of all Romane, the adoption of it as the designation of the "poetisches Maksimum" implied the thesis of the superiority of the Roman over all other genres; and it was from the characteristics of Meister that the general notion of "the Romantic" at least as an aesthetic category, was derived (p. 387).

At the end of the eighteenth century, the German term *Roman* ("novel") had a wider meaning than it has today. It referred not only to the prose narrative which we call as the novel today, but also to the medieval romance and to some other minor genres which can be related to the early modern romance (Eichner, 1956). In his work *Dialogue on Poetry*, F. Schlegel (1982) argues that a novel is a romantic book, and that it represents the most significant invention of the modern analytical sensibility. It can be regarded as the equivalent of Socratic dialogue, for it aims at integration of intellectual, moral, social and aesthetic beliefs at the level of poetry. With this understanding of Roman, F. Schlegel thought that the novel would represent the keystone of a modern philosophy of art (Lange, 1955). But he formulated these ideas almost around 1797, and in his early period between 1790-1796, F. Schlegel defended a very different perspective. The doctrine F. Schlegel defended at that time was a sort of *aesthetic rationalism*. Like Kant, his main interest was to discover the objective criteria of aesthetics and he regarded beauty as an objective quality of the art work. All aesthetic value must be of universal quality, and it should be independent of any subjective interest of the artist. He contrasted *objektive Poesie* ("objective poetry") with *interesante Poesie*, the former being shaped by objective and universal aesthetic criteria and the second being a subjective expression of the feelings and passions of the artist (Schlegel, 2001). Lange (1955) claims:

> Schlegel assumes a disparity between idea and appearance that is resolvable in the creation of beauty. In beauty, chaos may become cosmos, and cosmos is the ultimate creative order adequate to the human potentialities. To represent this free playing and "disinterested" state of

> order in beauty is the purpose of all classical art. Modern poetry, on the other hand, does not aim, in Schlegel's early view (as in Schiller's), at the creation of an objective beauty with a validity, an aesthetic existence in itself; it represents rather, and makes available for analysis, the tensions of life which are bound to remain irreconcilable. Modern art creates not beauty but what Schlegel in the "Studium" essay, adopting the terminology of Herder and Kant, calls the "interesting" (p. 291).

It was Schiller's notion of sentimentality which transformed F. Schlegel's aesthetic understanding. It had two different meanings for F. Schlegel. The first is taken literally from Schiller as quoted by Eichner (1956): "Absolute representation is naive; representation of the Absolute is sentimental" (p. 1027). The second definition was given in F. Schlegel's *Dialogue on Poetry*. Eichner (1956) quotes from F. Schlegel: "What is then this sentimental? It is what responds to us, where the feeling rules, and not a sensible, but a spiritual one. The source and the soul all of these emotions is love, and the soul of love must be floating invisibly everywhere in the romantic poetry" (p. 1027).

F. Schlegel pointed out three examples for his glorified notion of romantic; in his words Shakespeare, Dante and Goethe make up the three great artists of the modern poetry. Dante's *prophetic poem* is the highest of its kind, Goethe's *pure poetical poetry* is the most complete poetry of poetry and Shakespeare's universality is the centre of romantic art (Lovejoy, 1917). F. Schlegel (1982) also added Cervantes to this trilogy, whom he saw as the father of the older moderns:

> Please do not immediately assume that the romantic and the modern are entirely identical for me… Think of Shakespeare, in whom I would like to fix the actual center, the core of the romantic imagination. This is where I look for and find the romantic, -in the older moderns, in Shakespeare, Cervantes, in Italian poetry, in that age of knights, love, and fairy tales in which the thing itself and the word for it originated (p. 107).

This picture is clearly different from his early classical period. But was it really a revolution? Lovejoy (1920) argues that this notion of romantic was implicit already in his first period:

> F. Schlegel's Romantic doctrine of art then was already implicit in these two characteristics of his first period: (a) in the implication of the analogy from the Kantian ethics to aesthetics… (b) in his temperamental admiration for such a poet as Shakespeare and his strong though suppressed desire for a poetry which, imitating Shakespeare, should take all of life for its province, and make the abundance and fidelity of its expression of life the sole criterion of artistic success (p. 10).

In this respect, Lovejoy argues, it is totally wrong to assume that the conception of *Romantic poetry* was formed by F. Schlegel only about 1796 or later, that he abstracted it from Wilhelm Meister and that he firstly elucidated the notion in Athenaeum after 1798. Lovejoy (1917) believes that by 1798, F. Schlegel had been discussing Romantic poetry under another name for nearly five years, the *interesante Poesie* of the early period is identical with what he called *romantische Poesie* after 1798: "What befell in 1796 was neither the discovery, nor the invention of the Romantic doctrine of art by F. Schlegel, but merely his conversion to it" (p. 74).

The thesis of Lovejoy seems to be extremely problematic, because it reduces F. Schlegel's intellectual development to a matter of taste and underrates the philosophical background of his intellectual transformation. F. Schlegel who admired universal and objective principles of art and who refused sensibility and feelings as a source for artistic imagination was a strict dualist in terms of Kant. But the romantic F. Schlegel of 1798, who studied, admired and criticized Schiller, Fichte and Spinoza, rejected Kant's dualism and Kantian terminology by postulating a mediating position between realism and idealism. Therefore, it cannot be argued that the subjectivist *interesante Poesie* is identical with *romantische Poesie*, because the notion of subjectivity of F. Schlegel in 1798 was completely opposed to the very same notion of 1792.

The qualities of romantic artwork will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, but in this chapter it will be shown that the notion romantic does not only

refer to a specific kind of poetry, but broadly to an intellectual mood and attitude which aims, as Krell (2005) argues, at "absolutizing –universalizing- classification of the individual moment, of the individual situation" (p. 47). Novalis' (1997a) statement is expressive:

> The world must be made romantic. In that way one can find the original meaning again. To make Romantic is nothing but a qualitative raising to a higher power. In this operation the lower self will become one with a better self… by endowing the commonplace with a higher meaning, the ordinary with mysterious respect, the known with the dignity of the unknown, the finite with the appearance of the infinite, I am making it Romantic (p. 60).

First Principles and the Principle of Striving

Like all the other members of the circle, F. Schlegel intensely studied Fichte when he was a student and was shaken by the revolutionary ideas of the great philosopher. Yet, in one of his letters to his older brother F. Schlegel explained, that in their first conversation Fichte told him that he would rather count peas than study history (Beiser, 2002). F. Schlegel was really disappointed by this declaration which revealed the lack of history and realism in the system of his master and in a short time he grew more and more distant to Fichte, while he was more and more involved in realism. Beiser (2002) points out that later F. Schlegel wrote that Fichte was "not enough of an absolute realist" and "not realist enough in every sense and respect" (p. 440); F. Schlegel thought that Fichte established only "the ideality of the real" but not "the reality of the ideal" (p. 440). The reason was that Fichte's philosophy was far too abstract according to Beiser (2002): "Why not say for example that the non-Ego posits itself absolutely? Fichte's system is far too mathematical and abstract, leaving out the positive reality of experience, all his deductions can at best only derive abstractions, not individual facts of experience" (p. 440).

Although F. Schlegel found Fichte's distinction between the transcendental Ego and empirical Ego necessary, he thought Fichte was guilty for he limited the experience of the subject to the eternal present only, ignoring the historical dimension of self-consciousness which connects the past to the future (Beiser, 2002). In that respect, Fichte's notion of *intellectual intuition* relied on a sort of mystical experience, which, F. Schlegel thought, contradicted with the demands of critical idealism.

F. Schlegel accused Fichte of being a mystic and dogmatic, for Fichte begins his philosophy by postulating absolute first principles. He introduced two objections against the very idea of a first principle in Fichte's philosophy. The first is that any proposition, even the apparently self evident first principle can be doubted: Since it should also be demonstrated, there is an infinite regress of justification. The second objection is that there is an infinite number of possible proofs, which means that we can and should continue to perfect our proofs ad infinitum (Beiser, 2002).

This perspective is quite different than his position in his work *Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie* ("On the Study of Greek Poetry") which was published in 1795. In this work, F. Schlegel (2002) defended a fanatical neo-classicism and argued that all works of art should be judged according to a single objective standard of beauty. One of the many results of F. Schlegel's critique of first principles is that there are no universal standards of art criticism.

Another important result considering his epistemology is that there is no perfect system, for there are many ways, equally valid, of organizing knowledge and truth. But though F. Schlegel (1982) denied the idea of a linear system, he did not totally give up the ideal of having a system: "It is equally deadly for a mind to have a

system or to have none. Therefore it will have to decide to combine both" (p. 123). F. Schlegel (1982) explained why it is dangerous to have and not to have a system:

> It is dangerous to have a system because it sets arbitrary limits to enquiry and imposes an artificial order on the facts. On the other hand, it is necessary to have a system, because unity and coherence are essential to all knowledge and it is only in the context of a system that a proposition is justifiable (p. 85).

F. Schlegel believes that we can never begin with the certain knowledge that there is any first principle, instead we must begin with what we have, namely with the history of philosophy. Principles are always plural, they construct themselves together, and therefore philosophy should be circular: "Philosophy still moves too much straight ahead and is not yet cyclical enough" (p. 122). He called his new methodology *Wechselerweis* ("changing proof" or "changes of proof"), which represented the mutual support of propositions in a whole as the only standard of truth. *Wechselerweis* was grasped as an exchange between a principle of consciousness and an idea of the infinite (Millán-Zaibert, 2007). This holistic point of justification accepts the organic unity and plurality of starting points in philosophy and suggests a reciprocal, mutual, alternating confirmation. There is no linear system consisting of a single deductive chain, but we can start anywhere, i.e., in the middle, from any proposition and return back to it, since all propositions are interconnected, since philosophy should be circular. Millán-Zaibert (2007) quote from F. Schlegel: "Our philosophy doesn't begin like the others with a first principle –where the first proposition is like the center or first ring of a comet – with the rest a long tail of mist- we depart from a small but living seed –our center lies in the middle" (p. 84).

The notion of *the middle* signifies his historical and evolutionary perspective, in the sense that our position in philosophy should have a beginning and an end, a history. This genetic, evolutionary and synthetic perspective is far different from

Kant's and especially from Fichte's strictly deductive or syllogistic methodology. For F. Schlegel, construction is always stronger than deduction. Fichte and Kant were both egocentric with their philosophical systems, there was no need to look at other systems. In another fragment, F. Schlegel blames Fichte for repeating the same failure of Descartes. Here is another quotation of Schlegel by Millán-Zaibert (2007):

> To entirely abstract from all previous systems and throw all of this away as Descartes attempted to do is absolutely impossible. Such an entirely new creation from one's own mind, a complete forgetting of all which has been thought before, was also attempted by Fichte and he too failed in this (p. 83).

This perspective is a significant departure from Fichte also in the sense that our epistemological limitation makes it impossible for us to get a transparent idea of *being*, because Fichte believed that being is transparent to reason. But of course, from the fact that the *Absolute* is not transparent to consciousness, it does not follow that there is no Absolute. On the contrary, what was in the center of F. Schlegel's unique philosophy was that there exists the so called Absolute, but we cannot capture it absolutely.[14] Philosophy must aim for but cannot capture the whole system of knowledge. What we can do is to accept the plurality of systems in philosophy, for each system can offer a piece of the whole, but never the complete system.[15] In this respect, F. Schlegel is closer to Jacobi and even to Kant than Fichte considering the question of the knowledge of the Absolute. Beiser (2002) argues that Kant defended

[14] Any principle beyond our capacity of knowledge cannot be a principle of being, it can only be a principle of representation. With this idea, Schlegel refused the reality of the Kantian thing-in-itself.

[15] Niethammer, who was a close friend of Schlegel, followed a similar line of thought. He asks this question: If philosophy doesn't begin with an absolute first principle, can it begin with common understanding and thereby attempt to approach the ideal of a complete system? Niethammer's solution is to turn toward the fact of experience as his starting point. Philosophy should strive to develop its relation to common experience rather than losing itself in empty speculation. Niethammer thought that only the claims of common sense are self-evident and in no need of proof or demonstration. He concluded that common sense should have the last word, if a philosophical claim is to be rejected (Millán-Zaibert, 2007).

that reason operates according to the principles of sufficient reason, which means there is always another cause for any event and reason cannot grasp the first cause or the unconditioned. But Kant, in a similar manner to Fichte, refused history as central to the work of the philosopher. For Kant, knowledge results from the absolute certainty of the primitives and neither of these primitives depend in any way upon what follows. The conclusion is that we can understand the whole scope of knowledge through an analysis of its parts only (Millán-Zaibert, 2007). While both Fichte and Kant used an analytic strategy to obtain knowledge, F. Schlegel used a holistic and synthetic method.

It can also be said that F. Schlegel's epistemology is educational in the sense that its aim is not to capture the complete system of knowledge, but to educate people more and more. Its aim is not absolute certainty, but greater and greater degrees of certainty. F. Schlegel (1982) wrote that "one can only become a philosopher, but not be one. As soon as one believes he is a philosopher, he stops being one" (p. 123).

The lack of the first principles, this epistemological doctrine of F. Schlegel constitutes F. Schlegel's notion of freedom. Millán-Zaibert (2007) argues: "Absolute truth cannot be given, and this is the certificate for the freedom of thought and of spirit. If absolute truth was found, therewith the occupation of spirit would be complete, and it would cease to be, for it exists only in its activity" (p. 49).

This conclusion shows us clearly that F. Schlegel was attached to Fichte's notion of infinite striving, though he was strongly critical of the Fichtean ideal of first principles. Fichte's radical conception of freedom meant that the self has no eternal essence, it creates its own essence freely, the self is only what it makes of itself. Fichte also argued that the self also creates its world as a product of its reason,

only by the ideal of a rational world through infinite striving (Millán-Zaibert, 2007). F. Schlegel supports Fichte's notion of striving with two new terms. *Wissentrieb* means the drive for knowledge, and *Wissbegierd* means the hunger for knowledge. A feeling of incompleteness fuels our desire to know and motivates our infinite striving for knowledge.

F. Schlegel reflects the drive for infinite striving also onto philosophy itself. Philosophy is a never complete, but an unending activity. Novalis confirms this perspective in the quotation of Larmore (2000): "All philosophy must end with an absolute ground. But if this is not given to us… philosophy must be an unending activity" (p. 155).

The incompleteness of philosophy is the basis for its critical function. F. Schlegel and Novalis accept the fundamental principles of critical philosophy as defined by Kant and Fichte, but they apply the principle of criticism to critical philosophy itself, so that it becomes *metacritical*. F. Schlegel's (1982) call for a "philosophy of philosophy" in the very first Fragment of Athenaeum should be read in this context: "About no subject is there less philosophizing than about philosophy" (p. 120).

F. Schlegel was especially critical of Kant's understanding of philosophy. He praised Kant's revolutionary discovery that objects of knowledge conform to our categories of mind rather than our mind being shaped by objects of experience, but he thought Kant's system was not self critical. The reason for that, F. Schlegel explains, is that Kant believed that philosophy functioned like a natural science, but he believed that it should be more like a historical science. The judgments we make are not scientific judgments, but they are more like "philosophical judgments of art" (Millán-Zaibert, 2007).

Considering the status of philosophy, Novalis (1997b) defends the same argument as F. Schlegel, as expressed in these two fragments: “The history of philosophy up to now is nothing but a history of attempts to discover how to do philosophy” (p. 47) and “all philosophy begins where philosophizing philosophizes itself” (p. 64).

It is interesting how Novalis reached similar conclusions departing from different concepts. At the beginning of his philosophical career, Novalis was attracted to Fichte’s philosophy, because Fichte, by placing everything within the subject, eliminated Kant’s unknowable *thing in itself*. It is the activity of the absolute Ego which is responsible for the existence of all phenomena. Fichte believed that the self becomes conscious of itself, by reflecting upon itself from the non-Ego. The absolute Ego in this sense is dependent on its own creation, the non-Ego. Novalis modified this framework and in his version, the *I* could become conscious of itself only by becoming aware of its being part of an absolute sphere of existence. But this sphere is not static, it is a fluctuating movement between being and non-being, and the state of subjectivity, i.e., the human being is deduced from this mediating activity, as a transitory stage within this chaos of consciousness. The self positing of the self as I, is through this fluctuating movement between the self and the posited otherness (Riou, 2004).

As a result of this modified picture, self-consciousness for Novalis is only a possibility, since a complete reflection within this chaotic sphere is not possible. The absolute cannot be grasped through reflection, because the absolute is unconditioned, i.e., the cause of itself, but reflection explains everything through external causes. To reflect on itself, the self would have to be the object of itself. But since it is the ultimate condition of all knowledge, it cannot be such an object.

Although Novalis denied self-consciousness through reflection, he seems to accept a kind of intuitive and immediate self consciousness. This immediacy of self-consciousness is only possible if it relies upon feelings, in other words, self-consciousness is self-feeling. Intellectual intuition is the key concept, which combines elements of reflection and feeling. This picture is definitely a departure from former perspectives. Beiser (2002) argues:

> Unlike Fichte and more like Schiller, Novalis' goal is not the annihilation of the realm of sensibility, but the unity of our powers, an aesthetic whole where activity and sensibility, inner and outer sense, are harmonized with one another. The ideal constitution, Novalis states, is that where the highest degree of sensitivity is united with the highest degree of energy (p. 424).

Novalis' departure from Fichtean philosophy resulted from his objection to its over-emphasis of the abstract intellectual factor in creation. Novalis famously states that Fichte's I is a Robinson, a mere fiction. Gelley (1991) quotes from Novalis: "Fichte's I is a Robinson, a speculative fiction to facilitate the presentation and development of the Science of Knowledge [Wissenschaftslehre]. . . Every concept is an I=I is a general thought molecule" (p. 378).

Fichte excluded all non-intellectual qualities from the absolute-Ego, which resulted in the abolition of the possibility of notions like substance, absolute being etc. Because of that, Novalis (1997i) believed, Fichte's system is nothing but mere logic: "Fichte's whole philosophy follows necessarily from his presupposition of logic –and his assumption of one generally valid thought. The theory of scientific knowledge is applied logic –nothing more" (p. 153).

The purely fictional status of the *Fichtean Ego* is also pictured in the *Allgemeine Broullion* ("General Draft"). Here, Novalis (2007) insists that the ideal character of the freely constructed Ego places it in the realm of art, rather than nature. In this respect, like F. Schlegel, Novalis remained loyal to Fichte's radical

conception of freedom. Novalis declares that "all philosophizing aims at emancipation", that is, philosophizing negates all absolutes and legitimizes the infinitely free activity of the self. The principles should not be given but freely made by the creative self. All systems which are made by these freely created or imagined principles begin with freedom and go to freedom. Freedom is the highest goal of every philosophical system.

The denial of subjectivity as the self evident first principle by F. Schlegel and Novalis does not entail the total dismissal of subjectivity as an illusion. They signified artistic experience as the realm of subjectivity and as a guide in our approximation toward the Absolute. How Novalis places this creative act of freedom through imagination in the artistic creativity, we will see in the next chapter. But first, we will focus on the concept of irony, which is pictured as a result of philosophy's inability to represent the Absolute and as the main source of the drive for infinite striving, both by F. Schlegel and Novalis.

Romantic Irony

Romantic irony is a part of the general romantic vision of reality as essentially incomplete. It is the product of our recognition that even though we cannot grasp the truth, we must still infinitely strive toward it. Any attempt to conceptualize and explain the unconditioned makes it conditioned, since it applies some determinate concept and the principle of sufficient reason. Beiser claims (2002) that this conflict between the unconditioned and conditioned can only be overcome by the ironic attitude which makes "everything loose", as Novalis explains in the *General Draft*,

by showing how all standpoints on the absolute are only relative. Millán-Zaibert (2007) argues:

> Irony is the tool used to make the inherent incompleteness of human experience apparent. Romantic irony is playful and irreverent, but it is not the result of any lack of respect that Schlegel had for the world and reality. It is rather the result of a deep respect for and commitment to understanding reality (p. 167).

As F. Schlegel argued in the *Lyceum Fragments*, irony contains a feeling of impossibility and the necessity of total communication. Each attempt of communication is incomplete, because meaning always oscillates between the said and the unsaid. The act of understanding should also meet this oscillation of meaning. This way, hermeneutics becomes a usual part of everyday language and a necessary model for communication.

Although it is sometimes postulated that Romantic irony was invented by Friedrich Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck, it is better to claim that F. Schlegel derived his conception from Socratic irony and modified the term for romantic purposes. While Socratic irony consisted in possessing knowledge behind the mask of ignorance, or in expressing something by saying its opposite, F. Schlegel's irony involves the simultaneous presence of two meanings, between which it is not possible to decide. The situation in which the principle of non-contradiction is resisted is called *irony*. Albert (1993) argues:

> Irony is not understood here as the rhetorical convention that allows the speaker to express something by saying its opposite, and the interpretation of the ironic discourse does not consist simply in turning the "literal" statement upside down to obtain the "intended" meaning (p. 826).

According to this traditional understanding of irony as *rhetorical deception*, one should translate the ironical saying into its opposite in order to understand the real meaning. But Romantic irony makes one understand that it is not possible to understand.

Another source for the Romantic irony is the section of *Critique of Pure Reason* devoted to the *Antinomies of Pure Reason*, where Kant (2003) shows that it is possible to make perfectly coherent and logically correct arguments both to prove and to disprove the spatial and temporal infinity of the world. Kant concluded that the violation of the principle of non-contradiction leads us to the idea that infinity can be no concern for reason. F. Schlegel dealt with the same problem of the relation between infinity and the principle of non-contradiction but his conclusion was the reverse of Kant's. It is not that the principle of non-contradiction invalidates the question of infinity, on the contrary; it is infinity that makes this principle expendable (Albert, 1993). Since irony is where opposites come into contact, as F. Schlegel (1982) argues, it is "the form of paradox. Paradox is what is good and great at the same time" (p. 115) and it makes a link with infinity possible. Albert (1992) quotes from F. Schlegel: "Irony is so to speak the *epideixis* of the infinite, of universality, of the sense for the universe" (p. 827).

The structure of paradox in the sense of co-presence of mutually exclusive elements gives an appearance to infinity and makes it visible by reproducing its structure. As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1988) show, F. Schlegel also uses the term chaos to define infinity: "Chaos is the state of always-already-lost 'naïveté' and of always-yet-to-appear absolute art and in this sense is also a definition of the human condition" (p. 51).

The goal of romanticism is not to annihilate chaos, but to shape it, to make a world from disorganization. Organization and construction should exist within disorganization and man should learn to deal with the world in asymmetry. According to F. Schlegel, we find the image of this asymmetrical and chaotic world in the works of Shakespeare and in the Roman satire. F. Schlegel considers

Shakespeare and Cervantes as the supreme examples of irony, particularly *Don Quixote*. He was attracted by the grotesque antithesis between Quixote's chivalric idealism and the sly earthiness of Sancho, and he compared both Shakespeare and Cervantes to the naivety of the ancient mythology (Immerwahr, 1969).

Wit, humor and fragment are praised as other primary genres housing irony by F. Schlegel and especially by Novalis. Novalis (1982) took F. Schlegel's characterization of irony and formed his conception of wit and humor:

> Humor is the result of free mingling of the conditioned and the unconditioned. It is through humor that what is specifically conditioned becomes generally interesting and achieves objective value. Wit arises where imagination and judgment come into contact, humor, where reason and the will are coupled… What Friedrich Schlegel characterizes so sharply as irony is actually, as I see it, the result of and akin to true reflection –the veritable presence of the spirit. Schlegel's irony seems to me true humor (p. 65).

Wit and fragment as genres imply the "motley heap of sudden ideas" (Novalis, 1982). Wit is an immediate *absolute knowing-seeing*, it obtains a creative sight and a direct access to the productive capacity of the work. F. Schlegel makes two interesting analogies concerning wit by comparing its functioning to chemistry; the first in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's (1988) quotation "understanding is mechanical spirit, Witz is chemical spirit, genius is organic spirit" (p. 55) and the second in Athenaeum fragments "…if wit is the principle and organ of the universal philosophy, and if philosophy is nothing but the spirit of the universality, that is, the science of all perpetually mixing and separating sciences, a logical chemistry…" (p. 129).

The analogy with chemistry is explanatory; when we consider that the fresh chemical discoveries of the era supported the imaginative aspect in sciences and different modes of Vitalism.

A fragment like irony negates the idea of a continuous and complete representation. This marks, according to Novalis, "the victory of nature over the rule", because nature functions in a nonlinear manner like the fragment. And as F. Schlegel expressed, the essence of fragment is individuation. Millán-Zaibert (2007) quotes from F. Schlegel: "A fragment like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and complete in itself like a hedgehog" (p. 158).

Fragments have independent value and meaning but they should be concerned with reference to the whole of which they are part. The understanding of the System through the fragment depends on the *work* taking place within the fragment. Each fragment is itself a *work*, in F. Schlegel's words "a miniature work of art", in the sense that it is expandable and explains more than itself. Novalis' definition of the fragment is more open and clear. As Gelley (1991) points out, in a letter Novalis characterized his fragments as "initiators of interesting trains of thought-texts for thinking" and somewhere else as "literary seed" (p. 377). This definition of fragment is more naive than the explosive effect of the term by F. Schlegel.

The Romantics used the fragment as the main form for their philosophical declarations, but they in no way restricted themselves to the Romantic statement of theory, to the fragment. For F. Schlegel and Novalis, another fundamental form of communication is *dialogue*, which was defined as the "garland of fragments", for it consists of the exchange of fragments. Novalis invented the term *symphilosphy*, which signifies the active confrontation of individual philosophers, aiming at the perfection of dialogue.

Ironically, because of their understanding of irony, Hegel in a famous passage accused F. Schlegel and Novalis of "satanic impertinence". F. Schlegel's conception of irony, he argued, is purely formal and lacks philosophical substance; it bypasses

the problem of understanding, *die denkende Vernunft* and remains on a speculative level (Lange, 1955).

Though Hegel's criticism of Romantic irony may be valid within his own philosophical context, I think Hegel misunderstood and misused F. Schlegel's conception of irony. F. Schlegel was not concerned at all with the idea of substance, but only with creating a mood for the possibility of perception of the assumed infinity. In the next section, it will be shown that Hegel's picture of romanticism as mere subjectivism is severely wrong.

The Romantic Absolute, Nature and Spinoza

According to F. Schlegel, the infinite can exist only if posited, so there should be a positer, i.e., a consciousness of the infinite. Therefore, philosophy has two poles, as Millán-Zaibert's (2007) quotation from F. Schlegel shows: "And so we now have the elements which philosophy offers us, namely consciousness and the infinite. These are the two poles around which all philosophy revolves" (p. 138).

In one of his fragments, F. Schlegel also argued that Fichtean philosophy has to do with consciousness and in contrast Spinoza's philosophy has to do with the infinite. In this respect, F. Schlegel and the romantics placed the two uncompromising characters of philosophy at the center of their perspective.

Admiration of Fichte was a common attitude at the time, but respecting Spinoza was a really unique position for the Romantics. F. Schlegel (1982) clearly expressed his positive feelings for Spinoza: "I barely comprehend how one can be a poet without admiring Spinoza, loving him, and becoming entirely his" (p. 98).

Fichte played the role of the mainstream philosopher after 1794, but Spinoza was rarely recalled positively around the end of the eighteenth century in Germany. It was Jacobi who introduced Spinoza to the German intellectual scene again and Fichte praised the Dutch philosopher as a strong philosophical opposite and rival of his philosophy. Beiser (2003) gives a broad picture of the fundamental conflict between the two philosophers: "For Spinoza, human volition and action are parts of nature, and so occur of necessity according to its laws, for Fichte, however, human volition and action transcend nature, so that it is possible for them to be otherwise" (p. 134). In this respect, F. Schlegel's synthesis is almost revolutionary: "Man is free, because he is the highest expression of nature" (p. 152).

What attracted the Romantics to Fichte was his radical conception of freedom. What they admired in Spinoza was his synthesis of religion and science. The Romantics believed, Spinoza's pantheism resolved the traditional conflict between reason and faith, by divinizing nature and naturalizing the divine. The synthesis they acquired by bringing Fichte and Spinoza together was that everything falls under the laws of the divine and infinite nature, since there is no realm of freedom above and beyond nature (Millán-Zaibert, 2007). But what gives us the right to postulate the infinite? Beiser (2002) argues:

> If we abstract from the finite, and if we posit absolutely the infinite, we are still left with something outside the infinite from which we cannot abstract, namely the acts of positing and abstracting themselves. Since these acts belong to the consciousness of the infinite, it follows that the consciousness of the finite remains something outside the infinite itself (p. 458).

F. Schlegel's conclusion is that consciousness and the infinite are the two poles of philosophy, which are complementary. The only possible object of consciousness is the infinite, and the only predicate of the infinite is consciousness. The infinite gives consciousness its substance, and

consciousness gives the infinite determination. As Beiser (2002) shows, F. Schlegel reevaluated this picture in other terms: "The minimum of the Ego is equal to the maximum of nature, and the minimum of nature is equal to the maximum of the Ego, in other words, the smaller sphere of consciousness is equal to the greatest of nature, and conversely" (p. 458).

In this version, Beiser claims, the Ego and nature, *the ideal* and *the real* are not *absolute opposites*, but *polar opposites*, meaning that they do not differ qualitatively but quantitatively, because they are different degrees of organization and development of a single life force. Krell (2005) quotes from Novalis: "Matter and spirit correspond to one another quite precisely –one is like the other. Each has its pure causality in the other alone" (p. 60).

F. Schlegel argued that absolute idealism without realism is spiritualism. With the aid of Spinoza, they injected the necessary realism into Fichte's philosophy. On the other hand, the injection of freedom and life into Spinoza's static and mechanic universe brought the subjective element on a cosmic scale. This synthesis of idealism and realism has also been praised by Novalis in the *General Draft*. Beiser (2002) quotes from Novalis: "***Philosophy*.** The perfect coincidence of idealism and realism –the most perfect independence gives each the most perfect proof of the correct procedure… idealization of realism –and the realization of idealism leads to truth" (p. 427).

In the romantic framework, even the Kantian "I think" and the Fichtean "I am" are understood as expressions of the absolute. Therefore, there is no place left for the *noumenal* world, which goes beyond the *phenomenal* world of nature (Beiser, 2002). This explains why and how romanticism involves a greater degree of naturalism and realism than critical idealism.

According to Beiser (2002) the source of Rationalism in Romanticism is not Spinoza, but Plato; for they did not accept Spinoza's strict geometrical method, which begins with axioms and definitions and derives every proposition as a theorem. The main Platonic motives, Beiser argues, are the desire and longing to return to the eternal, the unity of truth and beauty, the role of poetry as a medium of knowledge, the fundamental role of love as a power of the soul etc. Millán-Zaibert (2007) believes the same:

> This Platonic heritage means that the absolute is identified with the logos or telos, the archetype, idea or form that governs all things. The absolute is not transcendent being, which is somehow presupposed by reflection and consciousness and so can never be its object (p. 42).

Beiser (2003) also found the origin of the romantic concept of intellectual intuition, the faculty which discovers unique kind of facts which are not given to the senses, in Plato and defended that it was inspired by "the vision of the forms" of the Republic, and the "inner seeing" of the Enneads. Though it is known that both F. Schlegel and Novalis studied Plato deeply in their youth, they have few references to the philosopher when compared to Spinoza and Fichte. This is probably the reason why many important scholars, like Manfred Frank, do not count Plato among the intellectual sources of Romanticism.

According to Beiser (2002), the conception of God by the Romantics is also influenced by Fichte and Spinoza. Novalis was attracted to Spinoza's ideal of the infinite and to his intellectual love of God, which demands reconciliation with the world through a rational identification with it. He wanted to make God the organizing principle of his encyclopedia, the basic definition of all definitions. Krell (2005) quotes from Novalis: "Spinoza ascended to the point of nature, Fichte to the ego or the person, I to the thesis of God" (p. 60).

With his thesis that Nature and the Ego are two aspects of God, Novalis refused *Wissenschaftslehre*, because it deals only with the subjective pole of the absolute, suppressing the objective pole. But we have seen that all first principles are only regulative according to Novalis. Does not this idea hold for God? Novalis' answer is that the idea of God is only the personification of the idea of an absolute whole, it is itself only a fiction. Whether God exists or not, depends on our belief in his existence. This picture is closer to Fichte's image of an imperfect God. Therefore we must seek God among man, in human incidents, thoughts and sensations. According to Novalis (1997i): "One must seek God among men. In human incidents, human thoughts and sensations, the spirit of heaven reveals itself most brightly" (p. 155). Beiser (2002) also found the historical dimension of F. Schlegel's metaphysics in his conception of God:

> The universe itself is imperfect and in development, gradually realizing itself through our finite actions. Hence history becomes a constitutive part of the absolute. This historical dimension of Schlegel's metaphysics becomes especially apparent when Schlegel states that God is really only a task for us, and that we create him through our own actions (p. 461).

This teleological understanding of God is also related to Spinoza's pantheistic perspective and it supports the synthesis of idealism and realism according to Beiser (2002): "The synthesis of idealism and realism means that we can treat nature as if it were visible spirit, and spirit as if it were invisible nature" (p. 427).

The naturalization of spirit and the spiritualization of nature are responsible for Romantics' organic conception of the thing. F. Schlegel thinks that only practical use of the conception of the thing is legitimate, its speculative use is not (Millán-Zaibert, 2007). Instead of attributing supersensible qualities to things and postulating Kant's thing in itself, the Romantics grasped things as being an equal part of organic life among living organisms. According to F. Schlegel, reality is an exchange

between consciousness and the world and things are considered as dialogue partners of individuals. In this sense, things also have a history; they change and develop within their relation to other beings. The argument that things have a life and history influenced Novalis' position that a complete control over our bodies is possible. The human will is creative and it is able to come in contact with the body, therefore my will can control my body. Novalis (1997b) wrote:

> All analogy is symbolic. I find my body determined and made effective by itself and the world soul at the same time. My body is a small whole, and thus it also has a special soul, for I call soul the individual principle whereby everything becomes one whole. I know myself to be as I will and will myself to be as I know –because I will my will –because I will absolutely. Thus within myself knowledge and will are perfectly united (p. 62).

This perspective is one of the extreme arguments of Novalis' so called position of *Magical Idealism* and will be analyzed in the next section as part of the discussion of the third aspect of Romantic ontology, namely Vitalism.

Vitalism and Mysticism: Irrationalist Drives?

The Romantic understanding of nature was influenced by two intellectual movements, namely by Vitalism and by *Naturphilosphie* ("Philosophy of Nature"), which were popular in Germany at the end of the century.

The German school of *Naturphilosophie* tried to combine biology and philosophy and was after a modern and scientific history of organic life. Their goal was to discover the fundamental organic types and to classify these archetypes under a progressive hierarchy. They adopted the metaphysical position of monism, arguing matter and *Geist* (the German word combined both the conception of mind and spirit) were two poles of the same *Urstoff*. Within this tradition of *Naturphilosophie*, nature

was no longer considered as the design of a *creator*, but became the free producer of itself. Without doubt, this conception of nature influenced the modern understanding of biology, as Richards (2002) claims, Charles Darwin owed much to German Romanticism: "Utilizing his theory of evolution by natural selection, he rooted archetypal structures back in nature, not as abstract entities but as historical creatures" (p. 10).

The modern school of Vitalism on the other hand, owed much to the experiments and discoveries of early modern chemistry. Discovery of the process of oxidation, establishment of the table of molecules etc. supported the belief that modern chemistry attained the status of alchemy. With this idea, Vitalists simply argued that everything in Nature has life, including stones, mountains, metals etc.

F. Schlegel's idea of things as dialogue partners was clearly influenced by this Vitalistic perspective. As no object is lifeless and things have inner life, the source of knowledge should be within the inner life of the objects. The objects are not ontologically distinct from the subjects, for something common is inherent to both types. Millán-Zaibert (2007) quotes from F. Schlegel:

> You, not as (as in life) something opposed to the I, or similar (human against human, not animal, rock against humans) but rather as a counter-I, and herewith is bound necessarily the belief in an Original-I. This Original-I is the concept which ultimately grounds philosophy. At this point, all radii of philosophy join. Our I, philosophically considered, contains within it a relation to an Original-I and a Counter-I, this is at once You, Him, Us (p. 150).

This Original-I is the whole of which each *individual I* is a part. This is the origin of the idea that we can understand things only if we consider the whole which they belong to. This is also the reason why F. Schlegel argues, as Millán-Zaibert (2007) quotes, that the *I* cannot be posited absolutely as in Fichte: "The I cannot be posited

absolutely or it would become a thing. Fichte posits the *I* absolutely and hence commits this error" (p. 150).

Actually it was Novalis who was extremely attracted by these motives and used some extreme examples of the Vitalist terminology in his fragments. Krell (2005) quotes from Novalis: "God is infinitely compact metal –the most corporeal and the heaviest of all beings. Oxidation comes from the devil. Life is sickness of spirit, an activity born to undergo passio. Annihilation of air establishes the Kingdom of God" (p. 60).

As in these passages, the romantic terminology replaced the symbolism of alchemy. Premodern practices of alchemy were based on the belief that the alchemist was able to interact with substance and thereby transform its nature. This belief was replaced by modern science's belief that the subject was no longer identical with nature but the scientist turned nature into his object. The Romantics protested against this development and tried to restore the role of feelings in science as in alchemy. Actually, the discovery of electricity and galvanism supported their position and Novalis' belief in the possibility of the idea of immortality.

The idea of death is one of the central conceptions of Novalis. This was mainly because matter and spirit were not seen as being opposites but as complementary parts of the same whole. If matter also has life within, death should not be the end of everything. Two fragments show Novalis' sympathy for death. Novalis (1997a) argues that "life is the beginning of death. Life is for the sake of death. Death is at once the end and the beginning –at once separation and closer union of the self. Through death the reduction is complete" (p. 25) and in *Last Fragments*, Novalis (1997i) claims "death is the Romanticizing principle of our life. Death is minus, life is plus. Life is strengthened through death" (s 154).

This sympathy for death should be considered as a part of Novalis' search for immortality.[16] It should be stressed that Novalis' personal history had great impact on his Vitalistic and mystical beliefs. At the age of nine Novalis almost died of dysentery and realized the possibility of death, which he was constantly reminded by the poor health of his family members. But it was the severe illness of his adolescent fiancée Sophie von Kühn, which oriented him towards mystical solutions and miracles. The gradual development of her disease, the disastrous treatments she had to endure without anesthesia and the desperation of the couple influenced the development of Novalis' so called *Magical Idealism*. [17]

Novalis imagined that someday we would be able to control our body and our external senses, as we are able to control our inner senses. He thought that we would make our whole body dependent on our will if we could learn how to control our productive imagination. If we could achieve this, it would be possible for us to change physical conditions just by changing the thoughts which cause them. Novalis (1997c) argues: "If our senses are nothing other than modifications of the mental organ –of the absolute element- then with mastery over this element we shall also be able to modify and direct our senses as we please" (p. 76).

Magic is for Novalis the art of making nature conform to our will. In this sense, mystical knowledge is nothing more than immediate intellectual intuition, which gives us the secret of the human mind and body. Beiser (2002) argues that this idea can be related to the ancient mystical belief of *signature rerrum*, the idea that nature is the secret language of God, his esoteric way of communicating with his

[16] He was clearly influenced by Goethe's notion of *relative death*. According to Goethe, who was one of the main characters of Naturphilosophie, only the individual dies, not the species, so that any given death is always *relative*. (Krell, 2005)

[17] Sophie died in 1797, followed by the death of Novalis' favorite brother. And the growing disease of Novalis became fatal in 1801.

creatures. Communication with nature, with the world was therefore the task of the poet-philosopher-scientist in order to discover and to live in harmony with nature. Beiser (2002) argues:

> Everything that we experience is communication. In fact, so is the world too a communication –the revelation of spirit. The time is gone when the spirit of God was comprehensible to us. The meaning of the world has been lost to us. We have only seen its letters. We have lost that which is appearing behind the appearances (p. 430).

This belief also influenced Novalis' idea of nature as a single organism, as one great mind. Man is perceived as a microcosm of nature, reflecting nature as a whole, as the world soul. Therefore in order to know an object, man should enliven it, meaning that man should exchange his soul with the soul of the thing.

With his framework, Novalis accepted a very different perspective than Fichte. Although Novalis borrowed the term of intellectual intuition from Fichte, he used the term to describe the experience of union of the individual with the divine consciousness, with the *world soul*, whereas Fichte used the term to describe the act by which the absolute Ego becomes aware of the non-Ego. Another main difference is that Novalis attributed this faculty to the empirical Ego, while Fichte attributed this capacity of immediate knowledge to the intellectual Ego only. While Novalis identified the capacity of intellectual intuition with *Ekstase* ("ecstasy") and *Inneres Lichtphanomen* ("inner light phenomenon"), Fichte never regarded ecstasy as a legitimate state of consciousness. Novalis criticized Fichte for having a limited world view (Lewis, 1962).

Their conception of *productive imagination* was also very different. While Fichte grasped the act of productive imagination, namely the positing of the non-Ego by the absolute Ego, as an unconscious act; Novalis believed in the possibility of the conscious action of productive imagination of the self, which is the origin of the

possibility of the control of the mind over the body. This difference is also because Fichte attributed the act of the productive imagination only to the absolute Ego which is unlimited and pure and therefore cannot be conscious of itself prior to the act of positing of the non-Ego.

It is very interesting that F. Schlegel was critical of Fichte, arguing that he defended mystical beliefs; while Novalis criticized Fichte because he thought Fichte's system was closed to mystical possibilities. This tension within the early Romantic School should be clarified, in order to be able to answer the most important question considering Romanticism: Were the Romantics followers of irrationalism or not?

It is true that F. Schlegel was severely critical of mysticism in his early romantic philosophy. Millán-Zaibert (2007) wrote:

> Mysticism is dogmatic. Dogmatism emerges because mysticism begins with an arbitrary positing of some Absolute. Insofar as mysticism begins with a single, absolute principle of all knowledge, it begins with a contradiction. This is the case because of the intrinsic unknowability of the Absolute. Any attempt to limit the absolute is bound to end in contradiction, for then the philosopher is claiming both that there exists an Absolute and that there exists knowledge of the Absolute, hence the Absolute is not Absolute after all (p. 89).

F. Schlegel thought that there could not be pure mystical insights, if there was no be pure empirical data. Without doubt, there is no pure empirical data, since all objects we see and we know are mediated by concepts. F. Schlegel's criticism of first principles made him especially critical of Jacobi, who made belief and immediate intuition the basis of knowledge (Beiser, 2002). Moreover, Fichte was among the mystics, because he postulated some sort of intellectual intuition. Millán-Zaibert (2007) quotes from F. Schlegel:

> The essence of philosophy is the search for the totality of knowledge. This entails the negation of all arbitrary positing (this is opposed to knowledge) and all contradictions (these oppose unity and totality). Hence skepticism,

> empiricism and mysticism are only types of philosophizing non-philosophy (p. 114).

I believe that the reading of Fichte and of his notion of intellectual intuition by Novalis is more satisfying than the reading of F. Schlegel, because Novalis was aware that Fichte refused the possibility of ecstasy, attributing intellectual intuition only to the absolute Ego. But this does not solve the problem, since Novalis clearly struggled to defend the possibility of some sort of mysticism against Fichte and F. Schlegel. What is more confusing is that F. Schlegel adopted some of the arguments of Novalis starting from 1797, as he became more and more involved with the philosophy of Novalis, which contradicted his early critique of mysticism! Beiser quotes that in 1797 F. Schlegel wrote: "With the mystical everything begins and ends. Only from the mystical must be derived physics, logic, poetry, ethics" (p. 656).

F. Schlegel's arguments for mysticism are limited and obscure and it is difficult to argue that he converted to mysticism after 1797. But the question still remains: Does this tendency of mysticism entail irrationalism?

My answer is, no. The tendency of Novalis and F. Schlegel towards mysticism does not necessarily entail irrationalism, since their main framework remained realist and within scientific and naturalistic understanding. Novalis never thought that control over nature and over the human body could be achieved by supernatural means, i.e., by waving wands, or casting spells etc. He insisted on a scientific methodology and on the priority of medicine. It is through medicine that the magical idealist learns how to increase our inner stimuli, how to read the inner structure of men from their external characteristics etc. But medicine should be combined with poetry, since it is only through poetry that we learn how to control and transform our sensible world, our feelings, our inner stimuli (Beiser, 2002). Still, the magic and all miracles are dependent on laws of nature; actually they are

products of nature. Novalis (1997a) argues: “Miracles alternate with the effect of natural laws… there is no miracle without a natural event and vice versa” (p. 24).

This interpretation of mysticism is way different for example from the mysticism of Jacobi. It was again F. Schlegel who distinguished between *true* and *false* kinds of mysticism (Millán-Zaibert, 2007). Not all mystics, F. Schlegel admits, are like Jacobi, who is a false mystic because he mixes empirical motives with purer mystical ideals. In this respect, we may consider the mysticism of the Romantics as a true mysticism, for they do not postulate pure mystical knowledge, or supernatural means for immediate consciousness (Beiser, 2002).

Another evidence of their difference from false modes of mysticism is their interest in history. As we have shown, they were interested in the historical evaluation of the history of philosophy and considered their perspective as a part of the whole picture. According to F. Schlegel, history is “philosophy in the state of becoming” and philosophy is “completed history” (Seyhan, 1992). Novalis (1997i) wrote: “Many people live better in the past and the future than in the present. Even the present cannot at all be understood without the past and without a high degree of education” (p. 156).

Their perspective of history was based on the belief that time and history realize themselves in representations. Kant saw time as constituting a priori forms of sensible intuition, but time does not belong to our representations. On the contrary, Novalis considered time as the condition of all representation and a prerequisite of all synthesis (Seyhan, 1992). Representation is an act of making present what is no longer present. This freedom makes the extension of the world in all temporal dimensions possible. Novalis (1982) argues: “History is an immense anecdote. An anecdote is a historical element, a historical molecule or epigram… history in its

usual form is something that has been welded together, or an interlocking series of anecdotes that has run together into a continuum" (p. 72).

Seyhan (1992) argues that this understanding of history as a collection of representations mimics their sympathy for fragmentation:

> Since temporality was representable only in fragmented form, history came to be regarded no longer as an archive of complete records but rather as a palimpsest of traces, obliterated notes, and memories. Time as past, present, and future, could only be conceived in memory and anticipation and synthesized in imagination (p. 60).

This perspective brings the Romantics closer to Herder, who claimed that it is only poetic language which can capture the pictorialness and textual nuances of history (Seyhan, 1992). Novalis (1997c) confirmed this point: "History is a great anecdote… History in its usual form is a series of anecdotes that have been together or have flowed into each other in a continuum" (p. 69).

In this framework, the historian should work like an artist, who plays freely with appearances without plunging himself into reality and looks for the discovery of the inner soul of events. History, F. Schlegel maintained, can only be understood as metamorphosis and metaphor, since all experiences of time and history are mediated through representation. And this re-vision or recreation of temporal experiences is the work of imagination and allegory, which are the main means of Romantic historiography. Through allegory history is also linked with ethics, for it is the tool which fixes and replaces the lost images of our history and thereby aims at the perfection of our collective memory and the completion of our image of humanity. Novalis (1997i) wrote: "History is applied morality and religion –also applied anthropology in a more general sense" (p. 163). This idea can easily be linked to Schiller's ethical ideal as Seyhan (1992) argues:

> Allegory fixes the reality that presents itself to consciousness in the form of images. The temporal progress of allegory toward absolute knowledge

> and its symbolic relation to it coincide with the concept of *Bildung* in romantic criticism. *Bildung* refers to the concept of the infinite perfectibility of the subject (p. 14).

Thereby we arrive again at the theory of ethics as the ideal of aesthetics. The next chapter is dedicated to this twofold relationship between aesthetics and morality in Romantic philosophy.

CHAPTER 5

AESTHETICISIM

Modern versus Ancient

It has already been shown that according to the Romantics the unity of the object and the subject, the *I* and Nature, can only be presupposed through aesthetics. Aesthetic experience is the only way through which we can understand the infinite and the Absolute, which makes clear that the interest of F. Schlegel and Novalis in art was primarily epistemological as opposed to Kant. In this sense, the romantic theory of aesthetics signified the departure of Romanticism both from the tradition of Enlightenment, since the Romantics assigned not reason but feeling and intuitions as the chief instrument and medium of knowledge; and from the dominant subjectivist trend of eighteenth century aesthetics, which was also defended by Kant who aimed to dispute the objective element of the aesthetic judgment.

As shown in the introduction of the third chapter, Schiller's theory of aesthetics deeply influenced F. Schlegel's understanding of Romantic poetry. Historical consideration and comparison of modern poetry with ancient art was crucial to both philosophers. Schiller defended the arguments which shaped F. Schlegel's transformation mainly in his work *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, which was published in 1795. Schiller (1795d) argued that the modern man is no longer in unity with Nature; that the modern poet is interested not in the objects themselves, but in the impressions which they make upon him; that the ancient poet moves us through Nature, while modern art moves us through ideas; and that modern

art is a *Kunst des Unendlichen* ("art of the infinite"), while ancient art is a *Kunst der Begrenzung* ("art of limitation") (Lovejoy, 1920b). While the ancient poet is a naive poet, the modern poet is a sentimental one. Schiller (1795d) wrote:

> Since the naive poet follows the simple nature and sensibility, and limits himself in imitation of reality, he can only have one relationship to his object, and there is, in this sense, no choice of action for him… It is very different with the sentimental poet. He reflects upon the impressions which the objects make on him and emotions are only built on these reflections, into which he is moved and he moves us. Here the object is based on an idea and his poetic force depends only on this relationship.

These were the ideas which F. Schlegel defended copiously between 1793-1795. What makes Schiller's essay revolutionary was that he found in these qualities an "infinite superiority" of modern art over ancient art; not degeneracy like F. Schlegel. This idea of the superiority of *the art of the infinite* over *the art of limitation*; i.e., the superiority of subjective and progressive modern art over the objective and static art of antiquity, was accepted by F. Schlegel with some modifications around 1796. Lovejoy believes that this transformation was complete in 1797 with the *Lyceum Fragments* (Lovejoy, 1920b). Lovejoy (1920b) quotes that, in a letter to his brother, F. Schlegel confessed how deeply he was influenced by Schiller: "Then I was so engaged in Schiller's theory of the sentimental, that I could do nothing than to read it and take notes for some days… Schiller really offered me keys" (p. 136).

Lovejoy's (1920b) argument is that Schiller is the spiritual grandfather of German Romanticism. Lovejoy (1920b) points out that F. Schlegel wrote in 1800 that the romantic is what represents us the sentimental material in a fantastic form. However it is a big mistake to assume that Schiller's *sentimental poetry* is equivalent to F. Schlegel's idea of *Romantic poetry*. Lovejoy (1920b) is also aware of this fact and reminds us that in certain respects F. Schlegel's Romantic poet even corresponds to Schiller's *naïve poet*. Lovejoy draws the distinction of the use of the concept of

infinite striving which was common to both philosophers. The infinite striving of Schiller's sentimental poet is a striving for the realization of the moral ideal. The poet who aims to express the true moral ideal of art is not interested in portraying *actual human nature*, but only the *true and perfect human nature*; whereas F. Schlegel was more interested in the actual world and its interestingness, its ironical characteristic, as Lovejoy (1920b) clearly shows:

> In the author whose own first contribution to Romantic literature was to be Lucinde, that striving by no means aimed at the "infinity" of an ideal of moral perfection too sublime and austere for human nature to attain; it aimed rather at the infinity of actual life -good and bad alike- as the subject-matter of the poetic art (p. 143).

For F. Schlegel (1982), the lack of reality in a poem or novel makes it nonsense, whereas Schiller (1795d) clearly stated that natural poetry has a dependence upon experience of which the sentimental knows nothing. Any kind of preoccupation with reality for Schiller is the mark of the naïve poet. This is why F. Schlegel considered Shakespeare as a Romantic poet, while Schiller considered him as a naïve poet. Though more akin to sentimental poetry, Romantic poetry also adopts some qualities of naïve poetry.

Schiller's conception was revolutionary, but his position remained within the dualist tradition of Kant. F. Schlegel (1982), on the other hand, tried to resolve the dualism between objectivity and subjectivity through his definition of romantic poetry: "Romantic poetry is a progressive universal poetry" (p. 126). It is progressive, in the sense that it "is still becoming, indeed, its peculiar essence is that it is always becoming and it can never be completed" (p. 126). This quality of romantic poetry resembles sentimental poetry. But it is also universal, in the sense that it "becomes a mirror of the entire surrounding world, a picture of its age" (p. 126), which makes it also akin to naïve poetry. In this respect, romantic poetry has

both subjective and objective elements. On the one hand, it aims for the freedom and self-expression of the feelings of the artist; on the other hand it is a demand for truth, completeness and totality. The second objective aspect of Romantic poetry remains foreign to Schiller's conception of sentimental poetry, because it lacks interest in actual human nature and its conditions (Lovejoy, 1920b).

In a similar fashion, the implications of the modern and the ancient are not contradictory in F. Schlegel. Even in his romantic period, F. Schlegel (1982) admired many characteristics of the ancient world, furthermore he thought that modern poetry was inferior to the ancient in some respects.

> I will go right to the point. Our poetry, I maintain, lacks a focal point, such as mythology was for the ancients, and one could summarize all the Essentials in which modern poetry is inferior to the ancient in these words: we have no mythology. But, I add, we are close to obtaining one or, rather, it is time that we earnestly work together to create one (p. 96).

It was Herder whose slogan was "let us study ancient mythology in the spirit of poetic heuristics, in order to become inventors ourselves" (Lange, 1955). F. Schlegel refused any attempt of recreation of past mythologies. Neither the ancient, nor the Christian or Oriental mythology is repeatable, since they correspond to an empirical reality, which is not attainable in the differentiated modern world. What we need is a synthetic mythology, which unlike its ancient counterpart, cannot represent states of mind in harmony with the sensuous world (Lange, 1955), but which, according to F. Schlegel (1982) "must be forged from the deepest depths of the spirit" (p. 96). The three sources of the new mythology as referred to by F. Schlegel in his "Speech on Mythology" reflect his philosophical origins. Lange (1955) marks these: "The idealistic philosophy of Fichte, the abstract and imageless thinking of Spinoza, and the emerging interest in the special sort of natural science which his own friends J. W. Ritter and Henrik Steffens had advanced" (p. 302).

Hölderlin and his aesthetic program should also be credited among the sources for F. Schlegel's aesthetic turn. In a letter to Casimir Ulrich Böhlendorff, Hölderlin (1988m) argues:

> It is also dangerous to deduce the rules of art for oneself exclusively from Greek excellence. I have labored long over this and know by now that with the exception of what must be the highest for the Greek and for us, - namely, the living relationship and destiny-we must not share anything identical with them (p. 150).

On the other hand, Hölderlin intensively used concepts of ancient philosophy like love and *eros* to designate the longing of the soul for the eternal. It is through love that opposing drives of humanity will be united. Hölderlin explains this in his work *Hyperion* as quoted by Hammermeister (2002). "Like the row of lovers are the dissonances of the world. Reconciliation is in the midst of quarrel and all that is separated becomes united again" (p. 56).

Beiser (2002) claimed that Hölderlin platonized Fichte's conception of striving, because for Hölderlin striving is not the obedience to an ethical command like in Fichte, whose "striving Ego threatened to destroy the nature, turning it into a wasteland bereft of beauty, mystery and magic" (p. 403). Beiser (2002) argues that Hölderlin believes "life consists in struggle, a conflict between extremes where each realizes itself only by becoming its opposite, so that the moment of greatest conflict is also that of greatest reconciliation" (p. 399). The poetic spirit must grasp the *infinite unity* involved in this endless conflict and interchange between objectivity and subjectivity. In *Grund zum Empodekles* Hölderlin (1988f) signified that the objective is the indeterminate and universal form of life, whereas the subjective is its determinate, organized and particular form. But they are interdependent, for the objective realizes itself as the subjective, because nature reaches its perfection in art which is the highest degree of organization; on the other hand, the subjective realizes

itself as the objective, because art becomes perfect in becoming nature and the final end of human activity is becoming one again with all of nature. The ideal unity of human activity and nature is pictured by Empodekles who jumps into the crater of Mount Etna, in order to loose his identity and to return to the universal whole to achieve unity with nature. With this argument in his master work *Hyperion*, Hölderlin showed that to achieve unity with nature, man should not only have power on it, but he should also sacrifice himself to nature (Beiser, 2002). The notion *aesthetic sense* is another central concept of Hölderlin. Beiser (2002) quotes from Hölderlin who argued in *Hyperion* that "reason will not provide anything rational, and the understanding will not create anything understandable, unless each of these faculties are directed by aesthetic sense" (p. 396). Aesthetic sense is necessary, since it is the only way to rescue reason from skepticism.[18] If aesthetic sense is the stage of development of a person then based on his choice and experience, the validity of truth can only be given in literature rather than in philosophy, since only literature is able to give these personal factors which shape the aesthetic sense. It is obvious that Hölderlin's aesthetic program remains within the boundaries of Romantic aesthetics, though there are different views about whether he belongs to the romantic circle or not with his quite unique ontology.

Although the Romantic philosophy of aesthetics does not offer a systematic hierarchy of poetic and artistic modes, it has some arguments on this issue. Novalis (1997c) compared music and painting and argued that music is superior to the painting: "In music sign, tool, and material are separate, but in painting they are one,

[18] What makes Hölderlin's aesthetic program challenging, Beiser (2002) claims, is that he introduced Hegel's famous principle of identity and non-identity. Hölderlin equates beauty with the absolute and argues that beauty consists in "the one distinguishing itself", the principle of Heraclitus. If it is oneness in distinguishing itself, it is not just the unity , mere subject object identity, but also an unity within difference, i.e., the identity of non-identity.

and just for this reason in the latter each element in abstract appears so incomplete" (p. 72). The musician takes the essence of his art from within himself, therefore imitation does not apply to his art. This ranks, Novalis (1997c) argues, music closer to poetry: "Music –sculpture and poetry are synonymous" (p. 71). On the other hand, the painter uses a more difficult symbolic language than the musician and his art is entirely a formative activity since, Novalis claims, the painter paints with his eye. Poetry is the most superior art form, since it is both symbolic and abstract. And when Novalis (1997b) compared the lyric and epic poem, he preferred the lyric over the epic: "The lyric poem is for heroes, it creates heroes. The epic poem is for ordinary people" (p. 65). Hölderlin (1988h) has a more detailed picture of Poetic Modes:

> The lyric, in appearance idealistic poem, is naïve in its significance. It is a continuous metaphor of a feeling. The epic, in appearance naïve poem, is heroic in its significance. It is the metaphor of great aspirations. The tragic, in appearance heroic poem, is idealistic in its significance. It is the metaphor of an intellectual intuition (p. 83).

In Hölderlin's picture, the lyric mode is more sensuous and its emphasis is placed on the more immediate language of sentiment. On the other hand, the epic is praised for its pictorial quality and precision. Tragic poetry presents the unity of the better qualities of the lyric and epic through intellectual intuition. Hölderlin preferred the tragic form also for his own poems, but of course the content of his tragedies transcend the ancient model.

The criteria of F. Schlegel for judging artworks was the successful use of allegory (Seyhan, 1992). Since language guarantees no referential security, methods of art should also constitute an approximation of the ideal. Thus according to Seyhan (1992), "allegorical knowledge is the formal expression of our inability to grasp the absolute" (p. 70). Both Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch were strongly interested in F. Schlegel's distinction of allegory and the symbol. Benjamin argued that in F.

Schlegel, both concepts maintained a violation of linear time and transfiguration of that violated moment. But, according to Benjamin as quoted by Seyhan (1992), "whereas symbol glosses over this disruption of the moment in the transcendental image, allegory captures the shocked face of history in memorable form" (p. 68). Bloch also praised the freedom involved in the use of allegory, claiming that symbol tries to be metaphorically grounded, whereas allegory goes of metaphorically in all directions (Seyhan, 1992). F. Schlegel also related allegory and irony, for their function and goal was similar. Poetry is the most superior art form and the only way to picture the impossibility of the ideal, since the central means of poetry is allegory and poetry is in its essence allegorical.

In this broad picture, the Romantics aimed to combine the means of imitation and expression to find a middle position between the subjectivist and objectivist aesthetic traditions of the past. The next section is dedicated to the question of the role of the artist and artistic creativity to achieve this mediating position.

The Concept of Genius in Early German Romanticism

While the Romantic philosophers believed that the artistic genius creates the rules for his own art, they never argued that these rules are merely subjective and only significant to the artist. The synthesis of the traditional doctrines of imitation and expression made it possible for them to argue that in expressing his feelings and desires, the artist also reveals the creative powers of nature that work through him (Beiser, 2003). The creative and free activity of the artist is no more than the highest expression of the powers of nature, since it is nature that reveals itself through the artist. The artistic activity consists of two coexisting activities: The self expression of

the artist and the self expression of the absolute through the artist. This was the reason why the Romantics believed that art has a claim to metaphysical truth. Beiser (2003) thinks that this perspective marks the Spinozistic dimension of Romantic aesthetics.

This Spinozistic dimension does not limit the freedom of the artist; on the contrary it is the condition of his freedom. It has been shown that according to F. Schlegel and Novalis, the self is not transparent like in Fichte. As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1988) point out, F. Schlegel wrote that "no one can be the direct mediator for even his own spirit" (p. 67). If so, there is nothing in philosophy which can provide self access for the subject. But F. Schlegel and Novalis thought that this role of the mediator belonged to the artist: "An artist is someone who has his center in himself" (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 1988). In this picture, the role of the poet replaces the role of the religious mediator. Novalis (1982) wrote that "in the beginning poets and priests were one, it was only in later times they became separated. The true poet, however, has always remained a priest" (p. 66). Accordingly, F. Schlegel claimed that the artist perceives the divinity within himself and is charged with presenting this divinity to all mankind in his words and works (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 1988). This perception of the divine is an unconscious process and can only be achieved by genius. The unconscious element in artistic production and the role of the genius in this process is most clearly explored by Schelling. Though it should be argued that his philosophy of nature belongs to what we call German Idealism, his definition of genius may help us to understand the Romantic picture of artistic production.

Schelling (1987) draws a distinction between nature and the ego, by claiming that whereas nature begins unconscious and ends conscious and its production is not

purposive while its product is; the Ego must begin with consciousness and end in the unconscious. It is this contradiction between the conscious and unconscious which sets the artistic impulse into motion. Art consists of two different activities. The conscious activity is practiced with reflection and deliberation and can be learned; whereas the unconscious activity as the other part of art cannot be learned, but can only be inborn by the free gift of nature, which means it can only be practiced by the genius. According to Schelling, all artistic production is free in this sense, for the genius can produce according to the laws of his own nature. All other sorts of production is not free, since they are occasioned by laws outside the real producer and hence have their ends outside themselves. Schelling (1987) compares art with science and argues that genius exists and functions only in artistic creation:

> From this we can see why and to what extent there is no genius in the sciences, not because it would be impossible for a scientific problem to be solved in a 'genial' way, but because the very problem whose solution can be discovered by genius is also soluble mechanically… What science produces can be produced by genius, but it is not necessarily so produced (p. 211-212).

The question of how nature reveals itself through genius relies upon the thesis that the genius is inborn by the free gift of nature. The talent of direct representation and exact observation, the ability to treat imaginary objects and appearances like real objects cannot be explained through rational concepts. Without doubt, their notion of genius is one of the irrationalist drives for the Romantic aesthetics and it is in conflict with their historical understanding of the artist, who is "the child of its age". But these two conflicting worlds of the artist, i.e., the conscious and the unconscious aspects of his artistic being, balance each other and prevent the artist both from being a mere irratioanlist and from being a mere realist.

Beiser (2003) referred to F. Schlegel who wrote that "the soul of my doctrine is that humanity is the highest end, and art exists only for its [humanity] sake" (p. 42). This short and simple statement can be seen as a convincing summary of the Romantic understanding of morality and politics under the light of Romantic aesthetics, which, as Beiser (2003) reminds us, also declared the mainstream understanding of romanticism, as a doctrine of escapism and political indifference, to be false.

Though they thought that it was art and art alone which could restore the unity of nature and society, the Romantics rejected the utilitarian aesthetics of Gottsched who made art serve only moral and political ends and insisted on the autonomy of art. But how could they argue both for the autonomy of art and the primacy of ethics and politics? It is again Beiser (2003) who has a clear answer for this virtual paradox: "Romantics insisted on the autonomy of art not in spite of, but precisely because of, their moral and political ends. Ironically, it is only by virtue of its autonomy that a work of art represents the highest moral and political value: freedom" (p. 41).

Aesthetic judgment is the highest act of reason, since in the concept of beauty; truth and morality are unified, which binds philosophy to poetry. It is the same unity, which relates religion to poetry as stated in this fragment of Novalis (1997b): "In the ancient world religion already was to a certain extent what it will become for us –practical poetry" (p. 57). Their position was not atheism, but it can be defined as irreligious according to Novalis (1997a): "It is irreligion, if I accept no mediator at all… on the other hand atheism is only negation of all religion altogether and thus it has nothing at all to do with religion" (p. 35). The Romantics did not need

mediators as in traditional religions, since "everyone would have his own god to the extent that everyone has his own sphere in which he works and which he experiences" (p. 93) as Hölderlin (1988i) wrote in his article *On Religion*. They took this perspective to its extremes and made religion even a substitute for their educational goals. F. Schlegel (1982) postulates: "Religion is usually nothing but a supplement to or even a substitute for education, and nothing is religious in the strict sense that is not a product of freedom" (p. 130). It can be argued that Schiller's notion of *Bildung* ("formation") became the prior moral ideal of romantic philosophy as Novalis (1997a) declared: "We are on a mission. Our vocation is the education of the earth" (p. 29).

Another central argument of the romantic political program was that self-interest is secondary to the common good. They rejected the common understanding of a self-sufficient individual by arguing that the individual could not even have self-interest apart from the social whole of which he was only a part (Beiser, 2003). In this respect, the Romantics radicalized and politicized Kant's logical statement that one could not conceive the existence of a particular apart from the totality. Anderson (1941) quoted from F. Schlegel:

> Whoever out of exaggerated egoism separates himself from the total world must in the end lose all true higher reality, for this depends upon communality; only in union, in connection with the totality of all spiritual forces of the universe can one develop one's self completely and achieve eternity (p. 303).

Communality and pluralism were among the major characteristics of the Romantic school and their goal was achieving a universal individuality through poetry, in the sense that all humanity becomes an individuality, a morally united whole (Anderson, 1941). Novalis (1997b) argues: "The individual lives in the whole and the whole in

the individual. Through poetry there arises the highest sympathy and common activity, the most intimate communion of the finite and the infinite" (p. 54).

Another result of this perspective was a radical flattery of all social structures starting from the family, the church, the nation and the state. Novalis wrote that "the genius of the state shines in every true *Staatsbürger* [citizen]" and that "every *Staatsbürger* is a state official" (Anderson, 1941).

Nationalism also played an important role in this picture. But it should be noted that their understanding of nationalism was not political, but cultural, following Herder's position. Novalis (1997a) was more interested in discovering and strengthening the cultural foundations of Germaneness:

> Our old nationality, it seems to me, was truly Roman –naturally because we came into being in just the same way as the Romans… the instinctive universal politics and the ambition of the Romans is also found in the German people. The best thing the French have won in the Revolution is a portion of Germaneness (p. 33).

As it was shown in the introduction, this hatred of Frenchness was not a racist political position, rather a reaction against the cultural dominance of the French and a demand to protect the collective memory of people who shared the same language, the same geography, the same folklore and wrote their history together. Both F. Schlegel and Hölderlin studied and admired the world and the mood of Greek antiquity in their early period. Goethe's slogan "*stirb und werde!"* ("die and become!") influenced Hölderlin's notion *tapfer Vergessen* ("courageous forgetting") which stated that forgetting is the condition for the mind to achieve its counterpart so that it becomes more aware of itself. This is part of the journey of the soul looking for its lost better half, which was an idea expressed many times in Hölderlin's (1998) poems:

> For, see, the mind is at home
> Not at the outset, not at its source. Home makes it restless.

Colony is what the mind craves. Courageous forgetting.

Hölderlin concluded that to achieve the values of the Greeks, nations must avoid imitating the Greeks and adapting their aims and methods to their own circumstances. This diversion is named as *vaterlaendische Umkehr* ("return to the motherland") by Hölderlin himself. Thereby, Hölderlin turns away from idealized ancient Greece to local, regional and national concerns. This nationalistic aspect is to be seen especially in Hölderlin's war poems. National enthusiasm and self sacrifice is the main motive in these, an example of which is the poem *Der Tod fürs Vaterland* ("Death for the Fatherland").

Hölderlin possessed the hope of an utopia, which he believed would only rise on the deeds of the German people. The poem named "To the Germans" reflects Hölderlin's (1998) optimism:

> O my brothers, we too are
> Poor in deeds though we've thoughts enough!
> …
> but as lightning from clouds, out of mere thoughts perhaps
> Will the deed in the end, lucid, mature, leap out?

The assumption that the German people would rise "as lightning from clouds" and "out of mere thoughts" is reminiscent of the glorious Greeks, who have built an utopia from nothing, but with an important difference. The Greeks were masters of action and deeds, they were brave and passionate. But the Germans will dig their own way with mere thought, with imagination, genius and creativity.

Hölderlin's nationalism is also represented in poetic pictures of landscapes of particular places. Especially in his late poems, long descriptions and images of unpopulated places and images of infinite landscapes occupy a huge place. His trees, his mountains are not only objects in themselves, but prototypes of the divine. The landscape becomes spiritual while nature becomes poetical. Hölderlin argues for the

harmonious coexistence of nature and society. German skies and German mountains are part of how we define what is German. Not only the individual, but the nation is embodied in the landscape. Hölderlin (1998) wrote:

> Only mourn –when our towns, brightened now, are awake,
> Open and communal, full of a purer fire,
> And the mountains of German
> Lands are mountains the Muses haunt.

It should be clarified that these examples of *romantic nationalism* are in no way related to modern racism or the political ideals of Nazism. However it is also true that the Romantics' longing for absolute totality built up their tendency for monarchism and ended with their total conversion to conservatism in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Novalis's work *Christianity and Europe* reflected his extreme monarchist and conservative perspective; whereas F. Schlegel moved to Paris in 1802 and converted to Catholicism in 1808.

In their early period, there was a floating balance between individuality and communality, but this balance was damaged in favor of communality and authority at a certain point, which resulted in conservatism and marked the end of Early German Romanticism, or the Jena Romanticism.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Any study of Early German Romanticism should take into account that it existed as an authentic and independent philosophical position which belonged to its age due to historical and intellectual links. Without doubt it functioned as a link between Kant and the systematic idealists, but it would be unfair to signify Romanticism as a mere precursor for later intellectual positions.

If so, what made the Romantic school authentic and special? What were their main contributions to the history of philosophy? The answers to these questions and the major arguments of this thesis can be summarized under four subheadings.

Considering metaphysics, they broke with major aspects of the Cartesian legacy, the postulation of first principles, and developed an organic conception of nature to compete with the mechanical paradigm of the Enlightenment. Their break with former philosophical perspectives can be discussed under two subtitles, *Wechselerweiss* and organic conception of Nature.

Kant postulated the thing in itself as a first principle to secure transcendental conditions of knowledge. It was Reinhold, one of Kant's students, who argued that the first principle should be a fact of consciousness, which does not necessitate the existence of an object that is not already a representation. Schulze showed that the very idea of a first principle is problematic, since there is no way to escape skeptical objections. Could it be a solution to argue that the starting point of philosophy cannot be a principle but a fact? Fichte insisted that we need a real principle, but he defended that it should explain not only the content of experience as a fact, but also

the experience itself, therefore it should lie external to experience. In order to secure the independence of the Ego, Fichte rejected the thing in itself and placed the Ego in the center of his philosophy, claiming that the first principle of philosophy is the Ego's unconditional positing of its own being, which is prior to any representation.

The Romantics rejected the whole tradition of first principles because of two reasons: Any principle could be doubted and there are always an infinite number of proofs. The conclusion was that there is no complete and linear system. But the Romantics did not give up the idea of having a system; instead they defended that we should infinitely strive to obtain a system. The new methodology to deal with the plurality of proofs was called *Wechelerweiss*, which demanded the organic unity and plurality of starting points in philosophy. Construction is stronger than deduction.

This perspective is a significant departure from the Enlightenment tradition, because in this Romantic picture our epistemological limitation makes it impossible for us to get a transparent idea of being and subjectivity, i.e., a complete self-consciousness is impossible. To reflect on itself, the self should objectify itself. Since it is the ultimate condition of all knowledge, it cannot be such an object.

The Romantics never argued that there is no Absolute. Their aim was not absolute certainty, but greater and greater degrees of certainty and truth. This unending drive to strive for knowledge and truth, which owes much to Fichte's notion of striving, was practiced through the ironical attitude of man against the world, which was the only way to deal with the conflict between the conditioned and the unconditioned. Romantic irony makes one understand that it is not possible to completely understand and shape the chaos of the world and to make a world from disorganization. The Romantics thought that the rejection of a first principle was also

a necessary condition for the freedom of the subject. The self has no eternal essence; rather its essence is created by itself.

This proposal was completely new and authentic, since it presupposed for the first time a critique of foundationalism without the involvement of skepticism.

Fichte believed that human action transcends nature, in the sense that it is not only undetermined but also unlimited, since it remains outside the realm of nature. The Romantics found Fichte's program too abstract, as F. Schlegel argued that "absolute idealism without realism is spiritualism". They found the solution in injecting some Spinozistic elements into Fichte's program, to secure the necessary realism. In this light, they proposed that man is free not in spite of nature, on the contrary because he is the highest expression of nature. The unification of Fichte and Spinoza brought the two poles of philosophy together, which are nature and consciousness. They brought the mechanical and static nature of former philosophies back to life.

The result was an organic conception of nature which was supported by the Vitalist tendencies of their age and was brought to its extremes by Novalis, who claimed that human will can have a complete control over the human body. As no object is lifeless, the objects are not ontologically distinct from subjects. If so, Novalis believed, we can change physical conditions just by changing the thoughts which cause them, if we can learn how to control our imagination by educating our senses. Besides mysticism and Vitalism, the influence of some notions of Fichte is clearly recognizable in this line of thought. The difference is that Fichte never attributed productive imagination to the conscious activity of man. Does this difference make Novalis and Romanticism mystics? Since Novalis never defended supernatural means of controlling nature and thought that it was the task of medicine

and poetry to discover how to control our sense impulses, all magic and miracles depend on nature and its laws. This position may or may not be signified as mysticism, but it is clear that it is not an irrationalist postulation of mysticism.

In ethics, the Romantics stressed the importance of individuality in reaction against the formalism of Kant's ethics.

Kant aimed to provide an ethics based on universal principles of morality derived directly from pure reason, which accepts the autonomy and freedom of man as its first principle. These principles should be isolated from any kind of feeling, since inclinations influence men to act according to self interest rather than obeying the objective demands of morality. One acts morally not for an advantage, but just for the belief that the action is morally right. This formal characteristic of Kantian ethics is marked everywhere with the dualism between freedom and sensibility of man and any positive role of the feeling is refused for the sake of freedom of man and autonomy of reason. In this framework, the question of what motivates man to act according to objective principles of morality remained unanswered in Kant's system.

Following Schiller's critique of Kant, the Romantics thought that the denial of the role of feelings is the denial of what is personal in one's life. If Kantian moral principles are accepted, how can one claim the difference of an individual among others? The central principle of the Romantic theory of ethics is that sensibility, the power of sense, feeling, and desire is no less human than reason itself. They accepted that no two persons were the same; each had characteristics that distinguished him from everyone else and made him a free individual among others. With this move, the Romantics did not question the Kantian emphasis on autonomy and its central role in morality; on the contrary they took this concept a step further by interpreting

autonomy not only in objective and moral but also in personal terms. Sometimes our actions are right and moral not because they fall under some universal laws but simply because they are individual. They never attempted to define some universal and general laws of ethics like Kant, but aimed to provide basic conditions and values for an ethical life. In this sense, the Romantic ideal of *Bildung* could be described as an ethics of self realization, which echoes an Aristotelian understanding of ethics. Their claim that aesthetics is a basic tool to achieve human perfection and the moral ideal completed the greater picture, for the Kantian conflict between sensibility and freedom is transcended by the Romantic notion of aesthetic sense. Contrary to Kant, truth and morality are unified in the concept of beauty and art deserves its autonomy not in spite of, but because of moral ends.

In aesthetics, Romantics undermined the standards and values of classicism, developing instead new methods of criticism that respected the context and individuality of the text.

In his early period, under the title of an art critic rather than that of a philosopher, F. Schlegel adapted the Kantian principles of aesthetics to his classicism and defended that for all art works, universal objective standards should be postulated. Kant had made two points clear at the very beginning of his aesthetic program. His first argument was that art has no epistemological capacity because aesthetic judgment shares almost nothing with rational judgment. The second concern of Kant considering morality was that aesthetic judgment should be disinterested, i.e., isolated from all moral ends, because aesthetic judgment is non-conceptual and of merely subjective universality, whereas moral judgment is of objective universality. In a similar way to Kant, when F. Schlegel contrasted *objektive Poesie* with *interesante Poesie* in his pre-romantic works, he found the

objective criteria of aesthetics in the ancient art and rejected modern poetry, which he thought was a mere subjective expression of the feelings of the artist. F. Schlegel was generally attached to Kantian principles of aesthetics until he was acquainted with Schiller's distinction of sentimental and naïve poetry in 1796.

Actually there were two moments in Kant's aesthetics, where Schiller and the Romantics found the foundation for their aesthetic program. Kant thought that the experience of the sublime, which exists when man is subject to the destructive forces of nature, is similar to the experience of morality because it produces a feeling of freedom from nature. In his second reference to morality in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant argued that beauty hints symbolically at morality, because the impossibility of bringing the aesthetic idea under a concept symbolizes the indemonstrability of morality. These points of Kant influenced Schiller's efforts to unite art and morality. He supposed that the only way to build a moral community was through the aesthetic education of society, since man becomes free only through beauty. He no longer considered feelings and sensibility as enemies to the moral law and autonomy of reason, on the contrary, cultivation of individual powers and our sensibility became Schiller's central moral means. Schiller introduced his notion of free-play which cancels competing demands of reason and sensibility. In Schiller's system, art was not a mere subjective response anymore, but an objective principle. This objective character was supported by his definition of beauty as the sensual expression of freedom. Schiller's next step was to adapt this framework to his reading of the history of art. He defended the superiority of the art of the infinite which was represented by sentimental poetry over the art of limitation which corresponded to naïve poetry; i.e., the superiority of subjective and progressive modern art over the objective and static art of antiquity. F. Schlegel accepted these theses with small

modifications. While romantic poetry is more akin to sentimental poetry, it also adopts some qualities of naïve poetry. On the one hand, it is the self-expression of the feelings of the artist; on the other hand it is a demand for truth, and completeness. Combining objective elements with subjective grounds of art, the Romantics aimed to bring two traditional modes of art, i.e., imitation and expression together. In this sense, artistic production consists of two coexisting activities: The self expression of the artist and the self expression of the absolute through the artist. The conclusion of the Romantics was that it is only art that can reveal the truth. Beiser pointed out that their main contribution to aesthetic theory was this Spinozistic element of Romantic aesthetics.

Finally in politics, the Romantics questioned the individualism of modern contract theory and defended a communitarian utopia.

They found the fundamental ground of their political program in Schiller's slogan that the politics of the day is aesthetics, since man only becomes free through beauty. It was also Schiller who challenged Kant's strict separation of politics and morality. With his notion of the beautiful soul, Schiller defended that the stimulant for any moral action is the aesthetic pleasure in exercising the perfection of humanity. Beauty is the only source for the social character of man, since only beauty can unite individuals by making communication possible, for it addresses both natures of humanity, i.e., the sensible and the rational.

In Schiller's light, the Romantics argued that self interest is secondary to the common good. Community and pluralism were among the central notions of the Romantic school and their goal was to make all humanity an individuality, a morally united whole. Romanticism demanded all social structures to be strengthened and the result was a strong stress on the family, the church, the nation and the state. This goal

was to be achieved only through poetry, as Novalis states (1997b), "through poetry there arises the highest sympathy and common activity, the most intimate communion of the finite and the infinite" (p. 54). Their understanding of religion and nationalism was completely cultural. Hölderlin's statement that German skies and German mountains are part of how we define what is German is the most extreme mode of this culturalism.

It is true that their longing for absolute totality in political life and their insistence on the preservation of social structures motivated extremely monarchist and conservative positions. But what is authentic and unique was that they achieved a synthesis in which extreme versions of both individualism and communalism could balance each other and exist together.

As opposed to most modern intellectual critiques, Romanticism rejected the origins of subjectivism without saying goodbye to the concept of the subject; and defended Absolutism without refusing pluralism.

Their insistence on the peaceful coexistence of individualism and Absolutism distinguishes the Romantics from other kinds of Absolutism which threaten the individuality of man. The Absolute does not suppress the individual but exists for its sake. To reveal and understand the Absolute is portrayed as one of the conditions of freedom. In this respect the Absolute is not a *noumenal* entity beyond the reach of man, but his partner. The vitalistic elements of Romantic philosophy support this argument. According to the Romantics, there is no hierarchy between Nature and the individual; things and living organisms coexist peacefully as dialogue partners.

The Romantics argued that the differences between individuals should be respected. The Romantic ethics of individuality allows a greater space for the

individual choices of persons than the Kantian moral system and broadens thereby the sphere of freedom.

The New Mythology of Early German Romanticism defended a political program based on aesthetics which becomes politicized and struggles for freedom. It is very significant to point out that the Romantics were not elitists, since they argued that the whole society deserves and must be educated aesthetically. The special status of the genius does not reject this framework, because, according to the Romantics, the genius plays his role for the sake of the whole society.

As a result, what still makes Romanticism interesting and valuable today is that it portrayed a strong cultural, political and moral critique of modernity, without being involved in dualistic traps. Considering this authentic position of the Romantic philosophy, I strongly believe that the program of Early German Romanticism, the New Mythology, should play an active role in today's world.

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