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The Women Writers of Philosophical Romanticism

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# *Symphilosophie* 2 / 2020

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*Editors-in-Chief — Direction Scientifique — Responsabili intellettuali — Herausgeberinnen:*

Giulia Valpione  
Università degli Studi di Padova  
Dipartimento FISPPA  
Piazza Capitaniato, 3  
35139 Padova  
giuliavalpione@gmail.com

Laure Cahen-Maurel  
Université Paris-Sorbonne  
Centre Victor Basch  
17 rue Victor Cousin  
75005 Paris  
laurecm2004@yahoo.fr

*Email:* symphilosophie2018@gmail.com

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La pensée des écrivaines du romantisme

Il pensiero delle scrittrici e filosofe del romanticismo

Die Schriftstellerinnen der philosophischen Romantik

Edited by

LAURE CAHEN-MAUREL & GIULIA VALPIONE

Associate Editor: David W. Wood

Assistant Editors: Manja Kisner, Cody Staton

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## Editorial

This second issue of *Symphilosophie* is responding to a conjuncture: the field of philosophy is currently carrying out with renewed intensity a critical self-examination that is reassessing the manner in which the history of philosophy is being written and taught. This conjuncture also directly relates to research on German romantic philosophy: the question whether to enlarge or even change the canonical corpus of the history of thought from which women – with rare exceptions – are often absent.

In the 1980s, philosophers attentive to the intersection of history and philosophy particularly played a pioneering role in raising awareness of the exclusion of women from the spheres of reason and democracy, even in this so-called age of modernity. In 1984, Genevieve Lloyd released *The Man of Reason: “Male” and “Female” in Western Philosophy*<sup>1</sup>; in 1988, Carole Pateman published *The Sexual Contract*<sup>2</sup>; while Geneviève Fraisse forged the concept of “exclusive democracy” in her book *Muse de la raison, la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes* (Reason’s Muse: Sexual Difference and the Birth of Democracy)<sup>3</sup>, published in 1989, the bicentenary year of the French Revolution. A philologist of the French Classical Age, Gilles Ménage, tutor to Madame de Sévigné and Madame de Lafayette, had already begun to highlight in 1690 the existence and importance of numerous women philosophers. However, his *Historia Mulierum Philosopharum* (History of Women Philosophers), documenting the work of sixty-five women thinkers from classical antiquity up to the early Middle Ages, a counterpart as it were to Diogenes Laertius *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, was largely forgotten.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: “Male” and “Female” in Western Philosophy* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1984; reprint Routledge, 1993). See too: *Feminism and the History of Philosophy*, edited by Genevieve Lloyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Geneviève Fraisse, *Muse de la raison, la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes* (Aix-en-Provence: Éditions Alinéa, 1989). New 1995 edition under the title: *Muse de la raison. Démocratie et exclusion des femmes en France* (Paris: Gallimard). English translation: *Reason’s Muse: Sexual Difference and the Birth of Democracy*, translated by Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Gilles Ménage, *Histoire des femmes philosophes*, translated from the Latin into French by Manuella Vaney (Paris: Arléa, 2006). Meiner Verlag has recently published for the first time a complete edition in German, see: Gilles Ménage, *Geschichte der Philosophinnen*, edited by Christian Kaiser (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 2019). Translation in Italian: Gilles Ménage, *Storia delle donne filosofe*, translated by Alessia Parolotto, with an introduction by Chiara Zamboni (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2016). In English: Gilles Ménage, *The History of Women Philosophers* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

Considering philosophy as a ‘conjunctural practice’<sup>5</sup>, to borrow Pierre Macherey’s term, is essential for establishing the legitimacy of a history of philosophy that is regularly contested. Macherey maintains that there is no philosophy in an absolute sense, rather it is to be found in more or less clearly defined and specific situations in which philosophical reflection is carried out. Consequently, the act of philosophizing is intrinsically linked with the historical investigation into the conditions and limits of its exercise. Friedrich Schlegel had already underscored this aspect using the concept of a “genetic” history of philosophy; for him, philosophy does not exist outside of its own history or time when we are “symphilosophizing.”<sup>6</sup> Walter Benjamin viewed the romantic journal the *Athenaeum* as a model for all journals precisely because it was capable of “distilling what is truly relevant.”<sup>7</sup> He consciously drew from the romantic conception of philosophy a number of precious lessons about the “true concept of history”<sup>8</sup>: a historical time that is actively constructed, discontinuous, qualitative, and charged with relevance for the present. – That is to say, it redemptively carries the hidden and revolutionary potentials of the past over into the present time. The journal *Symphilosophie* seeks to continue this heritage; to contribute in this spirit to the history of romantic philosophy.

What is particularly new today, in this age of digital media and online social networks, is that collective, institutional and organised practices are being created to reconstruct a history of women in philosophy. In the last forty years, historiography has increasingly documented the history of women by gathering testimony about their lives and work. In order to fill in the historical gaps or “silences,”<sup>9</sup> it highlights the uniqueness, sufferings, and successes of these women. It no longer simply catalogues them as wives, mothers etc., but as individuals in their own right. Similarly, one of the aims of current scholarship is to gather concrete examples of women philosophers,

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<sup>5</sup> “Entretien avec Pierre Macherey. Propos recueillis par Olivier Koettlitz,” *Le Philosophoïre*, n° 20, 2003 (2), pp. 7-20, online: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-le-philosophoïre-2003-2-page-7.htm>, consulted 14 November 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Entwicklung der Philosophie in zwölf Büchern*, in: *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, vol. 12, ed. Jean-Jacques Anstett (Munich et al.: Schönningh-Thomas, 1964), p. 162.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Announcement of the Journal *Angelus Novus*,” in: Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, eds. M. Bullock, M.W. Jennings, Vol. 1 (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 1996), p. 293.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History* [1940]; the expression appears in a variant of Thesis I: see Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, in *Werke und Nachlass. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 19, edited by Gérard Raulet (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), p. 121.

<sup>9</sup> This term refers to the title of the book by Michelle Perrot, *Les femmes ou les silences de l'histoire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998).

giving them a visibility and a name other than simply in relation to their husband; to amplify their voices after the “silence” frequently imposed on them by historians of philosophy and to reintegrate them into the whole history of thought.<sup>10</sup>

That is also one of the goals of the Centre for the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists, created in 2016 at the University of Paderborn in Germany, under the aegis of Ruth Hagengruber. With the active participation of philosophers from all around the world, including the American Mary Ellen Waithe and the Australian Karen Green, it promotes and facilitates contemporary and future research on women in the history of philosophy, notably by means of a digital archive of manuscripts and other documentation. In addition, in 2020 the project “Extending New Narratives/ Pour de nouveaux récits en histoire de la philosophie,” led by philosopher Lisa Shapiro at Simon Fraser University, in partnership with an international network of 11 universities, received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The aim here is the rediscovery of women philosophers and neglected authors by adding their work and names to a more inclusive writing of history. This project encompasses most areas of philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, social and political philosophy, philosophy of the mind, education) from the Middle Ages to 1940.

It is not only at universities that a reassessment is taking place. The work of eminent specialists in the field is now being made available by well-known academic publishers. The four volumes of *A History of Women Philosophers*, edited by Mary Ellen Waithe (published between 1987 and 1995 by Kluwer Academic Publishers), is a ground-breaking study.<sup>11</sup> More recent important works include: Karen Green’s 2014 *A History of Women’s Political Thought in Europe, 1700-1800* (Cambridge University Press),<sup>12</sup> *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader and

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Mary Ellen Waithe, “Sex, Lies and Bigotry: The Canon of Philosophy,” in: Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir and Ruth Edith Hagengruber (eds.), *Methodological Reflections on Women’s Contribution and Influence in the History of Philosophy*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2020, pp. 3-17.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Ellen Waithe (ed.), *A History of Women Philosophers*, Vol. 1: “Ancient women philosophers, 600 B.C.-500 A.D.”; Vol. 2: “Medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment women philosophers, 500-1600”; Vol. 3: “Modern Women Philosophers, 1600-1900”; Vol. 4: “Contemporary women philosophers, 1900-today” (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1987-1995).

<sup>12</sup> Karen Green, *A History of Women’s Political Thought in Europe, 1700-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).



Alison Stone<sup>13</sup>, and Paola Rudan's latest volume, *Donna. Storia e critica di un concetto polemico*.<sup>14</sup> And of course, there now exist trailblazing academic journals such as *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* (founded in 1983, published by Cambridge University Press) or *PhiloSOPHIA: A Journal of Transcontinental Feminism* (founded in 2011, published by SUNY Press). With respect to women in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century German philosophical tradition, it is exciting to note the forthcoming publication of three volumes by Oxford University Press: a volume of collected essays edited by Cory W. Dyck; as well as a collection of articles and an anthology of translations, both edited by Kristin Gjesdal and Dalia Nassar.<sup>15</sup> The work of Anna C. Ezekiel in translating into English and elucidating the thought of Karoline von Günderrode should also be praised for its foundational role.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in addition to all this innovative research, writing, and translation, the world of academic publishing is increasingly playing a part.<sup>17</sup>

The aim of these initiatives, therefore, is less to take women, the feminine, and gender, as objects of thought than to show women as *subjects* of thought. Not in the margins of the canon as exceptions, but as the focus and centre of a “different history of thought.”<sup>18</sup> The double image of lineage and bees employed by Geneviève Fraisse to characterise her own work on the “genealogy of feminist democracy” could be applied to this other history of women in philosophy.<sup>19</sup> This concept of lineage not only strives to present the history of these women philosophers in a more objective and scientific manner, but it also permits the construction of a symbolic sense (inscribing the contemporary in a continuity, a genealogy), an epistemological sense

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<sup>13</sup> *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader and Alison Stone (New York/London: Routledge, 2017), in particular “Part I: Engaging the Past”, 11-15.

<sup>14</sup> Paola Rudan, *Donna. Storia e critica di un concetto polemico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> *Women and Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, edited by Corey W. Dyck (OUP, forthcoming in June 2021); *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Women Philosophers in the German Tradition* edited by Kristin Gjesdal and Dalia Nassar (OUP, forthcoming 2021); and *Women Philosophers in the Long Nineteenth Century: The German Tradition*, edited by Kristin Gjesdal and Dalia Nassar (OUP, forthcoming 2021).

<sup>16</sup> Karoline von Günderrode, *Poetic Fragments*, translated and introduced by Anna C. Ezekiel (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2016); see too: *Philosophical Fragments*, translated and introduced by Anna C. Ezekiel (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>17</sup> Of course, more still needs to be done. To take just one example: the recent publication of *The Philosopher Queens: The Lives and Legacies of Philosophy's Unsung Women* (Unbound, 2020), edited by Rebecca Buxton (University of Oxford) and Lisa Whiting (Birkbeck, University of London), had to rely on crowd funding to be published.

<sup>18</sup> To cite the subtitle of the special 2019 issue of *Philosophie Magazin* (Sonderausgabe 13): “Philosophinnen – Eine andere Geschichte des Denkens”.

<sup>19</sup> Geneviève Fraisse, *Féminisme et Philosophie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2020), p. 240.

(identifying “long-term problems”<sup>20</sup>), and a directional sense (“gesturing towards the future”<sup>21</sup>). As for the metaphor of the bees, it serves to express the irreducibly “plural and collective”<sup>22</sup> reality of this history, in which each protagonist can be hailed for her “productive singularity.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the feminine elaboration of thought would be a non-hierarchical, non-unitary deployment of multiplicities, while simultaneously exhibiting a profound collective solidarity.

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Early German Romanticism on the whole already confronts and clashes with the conventional philosophical canon on account of its different manner of thought and presentation. Over the letter of an all-embracing system, it prefers the writing of fragments; instead of strictly discursive formats, it favours a variety of genres and artistic expositions, including treatises, discourses, dialogues, letters, poetry, or novels. Metaphilosophical problems arise that go beyond mere questions of gender or sex. Problems such as knowing under what conditions a text can be recognised and classified as being philosophical. The case of Early German Romanticism is particularly illustrative of the climate of suspicion and preconceptions that many commentators and historians of philosophy have toward its different modes of thought. The burgeoning research of the last twenty years, however, has swept away some of these preconceptions by critically demonstrating the fruitful philosophical content of the theoretical and literary writings of Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis (to single out just these two), which were long neglected on account of their apparent lack of systematicity. The first 2019 issue of *Symphilosophie* sought to present further evidence of the rationality, novelty, and coherence of early German romantic thought in relation to the philosophies of Kant and the German idealists.<sup>24</sup> The “Miscellaneous Section” of the present second issue extends these earlier reflections with critical insights from Karl Ameriks, Stefan Schick, Manfred Frank and Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak.

What remains to be more deeply explored is what the women of German Romanticism have to say within a movement that is recognized for

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>24</sup> See *Symphilosophie: International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism* 1 (2019) on the topic: “Philosophical Romanticism and German idealism”: <https://symphilosophie.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/0-symphilosophie-1-2019-issn-complete-17-dec-2019.pdf>

being ahead of its time precisely because it included women.<sup>25</sup> The current issue 2 of *Symphilosophie* therefore attempts to make further new contributions to this topic: the research articles of Jane Kneller, Anna C. Ezekiel, Catalina Elena Dobre, Bryan Norton and Giulia Valpione, all highlight and re-evaluate the role of women in the history of romantic philosophy. When they published their work, the identities of these women writers of philosophical romanticism were not always given; sometimes they employed pseudonyms. While certain others ‘only’ kept diaries, or carried out correspondence. Yet like their male counterparts, they often incorporated philosophical motifs into their letters, novels or poems, as well as writing theoretical texts. The fresh scrutiny that is currently being paid to their writings allows the standpoint of the men of German Romanticism to be confronted with their Other. That is to say, it permits a questioning of the ambiguities of the masculine discourse, which had imposed natural determinisms on the feminine condition while deploying the typically romantic dynamics of self-creation or self-definition – but perhaps without being able to extend it to its ultimate consequences. Here we find the principle of an equalization of the sexes while preserving the differences, and a convergence of genders. Conversely, it allows us to determine to what extent these women writers, as thinkers of freedom and emancipation, may be designated as precursors of modern gender equality on the one hand, and to explicate their views on the issue of a distinction between the private realm of feeling and the public sphere of politics on the other. This issue is in line with an approach to feminism that re-examines the history of philosophy in order to furnish a history that constructively supplements rather than opposes the dominant history of an otherwise essentially masculine tradition.

In order to make the singular voices of the women of philosophical romanticism better heard, the articles in the main thematic dossier are accompanied by a small selection of texts in translation. This selection of primary and translated sources contains materials that are often ignored by philosophers and commentators. We have arranged this selection *en face*, i.e. the translation (English, French, or Italian) is on the page directly opposite the original German text. Included are translations of texts by Caroline Michaelis/Schlegel, Dorothea Veit, Bettina von Arnim, Sophie Mereau, the

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<sup>25</sup> Of course, a great deal of work has already been carried out on this topic. Our current issue 2 attempts to build further on earlier research in both the fields of philosophy and German studies. See, among others, the anthology edited by Jochen Schulte-Sasse, *Theory as Practice. A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings* (1997), as well as the important publications of Jane Kneller, Alison Stone, Adrian Daub, Anne Pollok, Barbara Becker-Cantarino or Elena Agazzi.



Berlin *salonnière* Rahel Levin/Varnhagen, and Karoline von Günderrode. Anna C. Ezekiel has generously provided us with a beautiful new English rendering of Günderrode's poem "A Persian Tale" (*Eine persische Erzählung*) for this collection: we warmly thank her for this.

The cover of this second issue of *Symphilosophie* contains a tricephalic portrait, in which a woman's countenance looks toward the spectator and is adjacent to the faces of a woman and man seen in profile. It was created by the twentieth-century Berlin artist, Charlotte Salomon (1917-1943), who explicitly placed this work in the romantic tradition of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total art. This autobiographical painting is a fragment of a series of 769 gouaches entitled *Leben? Oder Theater? (Life? Or Theatre?)* created by this artist between 1940 and 1942. In this series, a main act is framed by a prelude and an epilogue, and it is conceived as a *Singspiel*, a popular theatrical work that is acted and sung. Drawing upon lines, colours, dialogues and typography, as well as verses that function as captions for the painting, and accompanied by various musical extracts: all these forms are artistically intertwined, just as different genres are interwoven in romantic philosophy and literature. This work of art is exhibited at the Jewish Museum in Amsterdam. We sincerely thank the museum and its director, Emile Schrijver, for kindly allowing us to reproduce this painting on our cover.

In addition to these research articles on the women writers of philosophical romanticism, a selection of translations, and the above-mentioned four miscellaneous articles, this second issue of *Symphilosophie* also contains two review essays, two book reviews, and concludes with the "notices" section – our bulletin listing the latest publications, editions, and conferences relating to German romantic philosophy. We would like to thank the *SGIR Review* for allowing us to publish a French version of a review essay on the volume *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*. The English version of that text will appear shortly appear in the *SGIR Review*.

The call for papers is now open for the third issue of *Symphilosophie* (2021). For this issue, we are especially accepting submissions of original research articles for the journal's "Miscellaneous Section." These research articles may be on any topic connected with German romantic philosophy. Contributors are furthermore invited to submit review essays, book reviews and new translations of primary source materials. The submission deadline is 31 May 2021.

With regard to *Symphilosophie* 3 (2021), we are delighted and honoured to announce Leif Weatherby (New York University) as its guest editor. He will be in charge of the main section of the journal devoted to the special topic: "Science, Technology and Early German Romanticism."

## EDITORIAL

Finally, we would like to express our deep gratitude to all the contributors to the current issue, as well as to the external reviewers for their generous availability. Many thanks also to Manja Kisner, Cody Staton, and David W. Wood, for their extremely valuable editorial support. With regard to the *raison d'être* of this new journal *Symphilosophie*, we would like to conclude by saying that we wholly agree with the sentiment of Jane Kneller when she writes in the introduction to her article: “Symphilosophy is not just an option. It is a necessity.”

Brussels and Padua, 9 December 2020.

Laure Cahen-Maurel  
Giulia Valpione

## Éditorial

À Laurence Cornu

Ce deuxième numéro de *Symphilosophie* répond à une conjoncture : le milieu philosophique est en train d'opérer, avec une intensité, semble-t-il, inédite, un retour sur soi critique qui réinterroge la façon dont l'histoire de la philosophie dans son ensemble s'écrit et s'enseigne. Un mot d'ordre circule, qui concerne aussi directement le commentaire romantique : élargir, voire changer, le corpus canonique d'une histoire de la pensée dont les femmes sont absentes, à de rares exceptions près.

Dans la décennie 1980-1990, des philosophes attentives à lier histoire et philosophie ont tout particulièrement joué un rôle de pionnières en sensibilisant à l'exclusion des femmes des sphères de la raison et de la démocratie. Et ce encore à l'âge dit de la modernité. En 1984, Genevieve Lloyd publie *The Man of Reason : "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*<sup>1</sup> ; *The Sexual Contract* de Carole Pateman paraît en 1988<sup>2</sup>, tandis que Geneviève Fraisse forge le concept de « démocratie exclusive » dans son livre *Muse de la raison, la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes*, paru l'année du bicentenaire de la Révolution française<sup>3</sup>. Un philologue de l'âge classique français, Gilles Ménage, précepteur de Madame de Sévigné et de Madame de Lafayette, avait pourtant déjà mis en lumière, à l'orée de la modernité, l'existence et l'importance des femmes philosophes. Son *Historia Mulierum Philosopharum (Histoire des femmes philosophes)* de 1690, une sorte de pendant des *Vies, doctrines et sentences des philosophes illustres* de Diogène Laërce, documente l'œuvre de 65 penseuses de l'antiquité classique jusqu'au haut Moyen Âge. Mais cette histoire a longtemps été oubliée<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Voir Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*, Londres, Methuen & Co Ltd, 1984 (rééd. 1993 aux éditions Routledge). Voir également l'ouvrage collectif Genevieve Lloyd (ed.), *Feminism and the History of Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Voir Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988 ; *Le Contrat sexuel*, trad. Charlotte Nordmann, préface de Geneviève Fraisse, postface d'Éric Fassin, Paris, Éditions La Découverte, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Voir Geneviève Fraisse, *Muse de la raison, la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes*, Aix-en-Provence, Éditions Alinéa, 1989 (nouvelle éd. 1995 sous le titre : *Muse de la raison. Démocratie et exclusion des femmes en France*, Paris, Gallimard, « Folio Histoire »).

<sup>4</sup> Voir Gilles Ménage, *Histoire des femmes philosophes*, traduit du latin par Manuella Vaney, préface de Claude Tarrène, Paris, Arléa, 2006. En Allemagne, les éditions Meiner viennent seulement de publier, l'année dernière, la toute première traduction allemande de l'ouvrage : voir Gilles Ménage, *Geschichte der Philosophinnen*, hg. von Christian Kaiser, Hamburg, Meiner Verlag, 2019. Traduction italienne : Gilles Ménage, *Storia delle donne filosofe*, trad. Alessia Parolotto, avec une introduction de Chiara Zamboni, Verona, Ombre Corte, 2016.

Envisager la philosophie comme « pratique conjoncturelle<sup>5</sup> », pour reprendre les termes de Pierre Macherey, est essentiel pour fonder la légitimité, régulièrement contestée par certains, d'une histoire de la philosophie. Il n'est pas de philosophie en général, rappelle Pierre Macherey, mais des situations plus ou moins clairement définies et affirmées, dans lesquelles la réflexion philosophique s'exerce. Dès lors, l'acte de philosopher a partie liée avec l'investigation historique des conditions et des limites de son exercice. Ce à quoi Friedrich Schlegel appelait déjà avec le concept d'une histoire « génétique » de la philosophie : pour lui, il ne saurait y avoir de philosophie sans l'histoire qui la porte ou hors du moment dans lequel nous « symphilosophons »<sup>6</sup>. Walter Benjamin, qui se référait au modèle de l'*Athenaeum* pour caractériser l'essence de toute revue en termes de « véritable actualité<sup>7</sup> », a su tirer de cette conception romantique de la philosophie – de son positionnement dans la conjoncture présente – de précieux enseignements sur le « vrai concept d'histoire<sup>8</sup> » : un temps activement construit, discontinu, qualitatif, chargé d'actualité, soit l'actualisation rédemptrice des potentiels cachés et révolutionnaires du passé. *Symphilosophie* recueille cet héritage. C'est dans cet esprit que la revue entend contribuer à une histoire de la philosophie romantique.

La nouveauté aujourd'hui, à l'ère du numérique et des médias sociaux, est qu'une pratique collective, institutionnelle et organisée se met en place pour reconstituer une histoire des femmes en philosophie. De la même façon que l'historiographie, depuis une quarantaine d'années maintenant, inclut l'histoire des femmes en retrouvant et en prélevant dans les archives des témoignages sur le quotidien de vies d'épouses, de mères, de paysannes, d'ouvrières, d'institutrices..., en mettant l'accent – au-delà de leur condition de femmes – sur leurs singularités, leurs souffrances ou leurs conquêtes

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<sup>5</sup> « Entretien avec Pierre Macherey. Propos recueillis par Olivier Koettlitz », *Le Philosophoire*, n° 20, 2003 (2), p. 7-20, en ligne, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-le-philosophoire-2003-2-page-7.htm>, consulté le 14 novembre 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Entwicklung der Philosophie in zwölf Büchern*, in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Bd. 12, hg. von Jean-Jacques Anstett, München *et al.*, Schöningh-Thomas, 1964, p. 162.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, « Ankündigung der Zeitschrift : *Angelus Novus* », in *Gesammelte Schriften*, unter Mitwirkung von Theodor W. Adorno hg. v. Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1977, vol. II/1, p. 241 ; « Annonce de la revue *Angelus Novus* », trad. Rainer Rochlitz, in Walter Benjamin, *Œuvres*, trad. Maurice de Gandillac, Rainer Rochlitz et Pierre Rusch, Paris, Gallimard, « Folio essais », 2000, vol. 1, p. 266.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Sur le concept d'histoire* [1940] ; l'expression se trouve dans une variante de la Thèse I : voir Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, in *Werke und Nachlass. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 19, hg. v. Gérard Raulet, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2010, p. 121.

comme individus à part entière, afin de réparer les « silences<sup>9</sup> » du savoir historique, de même le but aujourd’hui est de rassembler toujours plus d’exemples tangibles d’intellectuelles, de leur rendre une visibilité et un nom (plus que celui d’un mari), de faire entendre des voix délibérément réduites au silence par les historiens de la philosophie à partir du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>10</sup>. Bref. De les réintégrer dans l’ensemble dont elles ont été indûment exclues.

C’est ainsi que le centre *History of Women Philosophers and Scientists*, créé en 2016 à l’Université de Paderborn, œuvre, sous l’égide de Ruth Hagengruber, avec la participation active de philosophes aux quatre coins du monde, l’Américaine Mary Ellen Waithe ou l’Australienne Karen Green, à appuyer, promouvoir et faciliter, notamment par le biais d’un archivage numérique des manuscrits et autres documents relatifs à ces auteures, les recherches présentes et futures portant sur les femmes dans l’histoire de la philosophie. Cette année, en 2020, le projet « Extending New Narratives / Pour de nouveaux récits en histoire de la philosophie » piloté par Lisa Shapiro à la Simon Fraser University en partenariat avec un réseau international de 11 universités a obtenu le soutien financier du Conseil canadien de recherches en sciences humaines. La finalité est ici la redécouverte non seulement des femmes mais d’auteurs négligés pour ajouter leurs noms dans l’écriture d’une histoire plus inclusive, où sont représentés, du Moyen Âge à 1940, la plupart des secteurs de la philosophie (la métaphysique et l’épistémologie, l’éthique, la philosophie sociale, politique, la philosophie de l’esprit, de l’éducation).

Il n’y a pas qu’à l’université que cette réévaluation s’opère. Les travaux d’éminentes spécialistes du domaine sont désormais publiés par des maisons d’édition renommées. Les quatre volumes de *A History of Women Philosophers*, du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle avant notre ère jusqu’à aujourd’hui, parus sous la direction de Mary Ellen Waithe entre 1987 et 1995, peuvent être considérés comme précurseurs<sup>11</sup>. Dans la période récente, il convient de citer l’ouvrage

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<sup>9</sup> Le terme renvoie au titre de l’ouvrage de Michelle Perrot, *Les femmes ou les silences de l’histoire*, Paris, Flammarion, « Champs », 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Sur ce point, voir Mary Ellen Waithe, « Sex, Lies and Bigotry: The Canon of Philosophy », in Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir and Ruth Edith Hagengruber (eds.), *Methodological Reflections on Women’s Contribution and Influence in the History of Philosophy*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2020, p. 3-17.

<sup>11</sup> Voir Mary Ellen Waithe (ed.), *A History of Women Philosophers*, Vol. 1: “Ancient women philosophers, 600 B.C.-500 A.D.”; Vol. 2: “Medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment women philosophers, 500-1600”; Vol. 3: “Modern Women Philosophers, 1600-1900”; Vol. 4: “Contemporary women philosophers, 1900-today”, Dordrecht, Boston, London, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1987-1995.



de Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1700-1800*<sup>12</sup> ; *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy* sous la direction de Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader et Alison Stone<sup>13</sup> ; ou encore le volume tout récent de Paola Rudan, *Donna. Storia e critica di un concetto polemico*<sup>14</sup>. Il existe également des revues novatrices, par exemple *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* (créée en 1983 et aujourd'hui éditée aux presses universitaires de Cambridge) ou la revue *PhiloSOPHIA: A Journal of Trans-continental Feminism* (fondée en 2011 et publiée aux presses universitaires SUNY Press). Pour les femmes dans la tradition philosophique allemande des XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles, plus spécifiquement, on peut se réjouir de la publication imminente et concomitante, aux presses universitaires d'Oxford, de trois titres : un ouvrage collectif dirigé par Corey W. Dyck, ainsi qu'un manuel et une anthologie de textes en traduction anglaise sous la direction de Kristin Gjesdal et Dalia Nassar<sup>15</sup>. Saluons également le rôle fondateur qu'a joué le travail mené par Anna C. Ezekiel de traduction en langue anglaise et de commentaire de l'œuvre de Karoline von Günderrode<sup>16</sup>. En plus de tous ces travaux originaux de recherche et de traduction, le monde de l'édition joue donc un rôle de plus en plus important<sup>17</sup>.

La visée de ces initiatives est moins de prendre les femmes et le féminin, ou le genre, comme objets de pensée que de montrer des femmes *sujets* de pensée. Non dans les marges de l'exception au canon, mais au centre et en pleine lumière d'« une autre histoire de la pensée<sup>18</sup> ». On pourrait appliquer à cette histoire autre de la philosophie au féminin la double image de la lignée et des abeilles utilisée par Geneviève Fraisse pour caractériser son propre

<sup>12</sup> Voir Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1700-1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Voir Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader, Alison Stone (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, New York, London, Routledge, 2017, en particulier « Part I : *Engaging the Past* », p. 11-15.

<sup>14</sup> Voir Paola Rudan, *Donna. Storia e critica di un concetto polemico*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> *Women and Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, ed. Corey W. Dyck, Oxford, OUP, à paraître en juin 2021 ; *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Women Philosophers in the German Tradition* et *Women Philosophers in the Long Nineteenth Century: The German Tradition*, ed. Kristin Gjesdal & Dalia Nassar, Oxford, OUP, à paraître en 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Voir Karoline von Günderrode, *Poetic Fragments*, trans. and introduction by Anna C. Ezekiel, Albany NY, SUNY Press, 2016 ; et aussi *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. and introduction by Anna C. Ezekiel, New York, Oxford University Press, à paraître.

<sup>17</sup> Il peut encore, bien sûr, faire davantage. Pour ne citer qu'un exemple : la publication récente de *The Philosopher Queens: The Lives and Legacies of Philosophy's Unsung Women* (Unbound, 2020), dirigé par Rebecca Buxton (Université d'Oxford) et Lisa Whiting (Birkbeck, University of London), n'a été possible que sur la base d'un financement participatif.

<sup>18</sup> Pour reprendre le sous-titre d'un numéro spécial de *Philosophie Magazin* (Sonderausgabe 13) paru en 2019 : « Philosophinnen – Eine andere Geschichte des Denkens ».

travail « de généalogie de la démocratie féministe<sup>19</sup> ». Car la lignée n'est pas seulement l'histoire rendue visible de ces femmes philosophes, une histoire objective et scientifique. La lignée, c'est la fabrique d'un sens, symbolique (inscrire le contemporain dans une continuité, une généalogie), épistémologique (dégager des « problématiques sur le long cours<sup>20</sup> »), directionnel (faire « signe vers le futur<sup>21</sup> »). Quant à la métaphore des abeilles, elle sert à dire la réalité irréductiblement « plurielle et collective<sup>22</sup> » de cette histoire, dont chaque actrice peut être saluée pour sa « singularité productrice<sup>23</sup> ». La fabrique féminine de la pensée serait un déploiement – non hiérarchisé, non unitaire – des multiplicités, tout en étant traversée par une solidarité profonde.

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La thématique ayant fait l'objet d'un appel à contribution pour le présent numéro de *Symphilosophie* tend, par conséquent, à apporter une pierre à l'édifice : mettre en lumière et questionner l'apport des femmes à l'histoire de la philosophie romantique. Le premier romantisme allemand, de manière générale, confronte déjà le canon philosophique à d'autres formes de la pensée. À la configuration du système il préfère l'écriture fragmentaire ; au régime strictement discursif, la variété et le mélange des genres, traité, discours, dialogue, lettre, poésie ou roman. Des problèmes métaphilosophiques s'en trouvent posés qui excèdent la question des sexes ou du genre. Comme celui de savoir à quelles conditions se reconnaît une philosophie. Le cas du premier romantisme allemand est particulièrement significatif du climat de suspicion et de méfiance entretenu par les philosophes à l'égard de figures différentes de la pensée. Toutefois, les recherches en nombre toujours croissant de ces vingt dernières années ont éprouvé, et reconnu, la teneur philosophique revendiquée par Friedrich Schlegel et Novalis (pour ne citer qu'eux) pour leur œuvre, théorique et littéraire, longtemps négligée sous prétexte d'une scientificité douteuse. Certains de ces aspects – rationalité, cohérence, systématisme d'une pensée – ont été traités dans notre premier numéro<sup>24</sup> ; la section *Varia* du présent numéro prolonge la réflexion grâce aux

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<sup>19</sup> Geneviève Fraisse, *Féminisme et Philosophie*, Paris, Gallimard, « Folio Essais », 2020, p. 240.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>24</sup> Voir *Symphilosophie* 1/2019, « Philosophie romantique et idéalisme allemand » : <https://symphilosophie.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/0-symphilosophie-1-2019-issn-complete-17-dec-2019.pdf>

éclairages inestimables de Karl Ameriks, Stefan Schick, Manfred Frank et Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak.

Encore reste-t-il à explorer davantage ce que les femmes ont à dire au sein d'un mouvement réputé en avance sur son temps précisément parce qu'il les incluait<sup>25</sup>. C'est ce à quoi s'attachent ici les contributions de Jane Kneller, Anna C. Ezekiel, Catalina Elena Dobre, Bryan Norton et Giulia Valpione. L'identité des écrivaines liées à l'histoire de la philosophie romantique, lorsqu'elles ont publié ce qu'elles ont écrit, n'était pas toujours donnée ; elles signaient parfois leurs textes d'un pseudonyme. Certaines d'entre elles n'ont fait « que » tenir, pour l'essentiel, un journal intime ou une correspondance. Comme leurs homologues masculins, elles ont fait de la philosophie dans des romans ou des poèmes, mais aussi écrit des textes théoriques. L'attention portée à leurs écrits permet de confronter le point de vue de l'homme romantique à son Autre. D'interroger les ambiguïtés d'un discours masculin imposant à la condition féminine des déterminismes naturels tout en déployant (mais sans pouvoir les pousser jusqu'à leurs ultimes conséquences ?) une dynamique typiquement romantique de création de soi, d'auto-définition, et le principe d'une égalisation dans la différence ainsi que d'une convergence des genres. Mais aussi, inversement, de débattre de la question de savoir si ces auteures, penseuses de la liberté et de l'émancipation, sont pour autant des penseuses de l'égalité des sexes. Ou de la manière dont elles se situent par rapport à la problématique d'une distinction entre le domaine privé du sentiment et le domaine public du politique. Ce numéro s'inscrit, ce faisant, dans la lignée d'un féminisme revisitant l'histoire de la philosophie pour proposer une histoire complémentaire plutôt qu'opposée à l'histoire dominante de tradition essentiellement masculine.

Pour faire entendre la parole des femmes du romantisme, et livrer à la lecture philosophique des matériaux pour la plupart ignorés d'un public de philosophes, nous avons décidé d'accompagner les articles du dossier thématique d'une petite anthologie de textes choisis que nous donnons, disposés en regard, dans l'original allemand et en traduction (anglaise, française ou italienne). Parmi les écrivaines retenues – abeilles ayant chacune un rapport tout à fait singulier à l'écriture et à la pensée –, il y a les noms

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<sup>25</sup> Bien entendu, plusieurs travaux ont déjà été menés sur le sujet. Le dossier proposé s'appuie sur, et tente d'approfondir, les recherches antérieures à la fois en philosophie et dans le domaine des études germaniques. On songera notamment à l'anthologie dirigée par Jochen Schulte-Sasse, *Theory as Practice. A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings* (1997), ainsi qu'aux travaux importants de Jane Kneller, Alison Stone, Adrian Daub, Anne Pollok, Barbara Becker-Cantarino ou encore Elena Agazzi.

attendus de Caroline Michaelis/Schlegel, Dorothea Veit, Bettina Brentano/von Arnim. Mais aussi des personnalités plus mal connues : Sophie Mereau, la salonnière berlinoise Rahel Levin/Varnhagen, la poétesse Karoline von Günderrode. Pour ce recueil, Anna C. Ezekiel nous a donné généreusement une très belle traduction anglaise du poème de Günderrode « Eine persische Erzählung » : qu'elle en soit ici vivement remerciée.

L'image choisie en couverture de ce deuxième numéro présente une figure tricéphale, où un visage de femme vu de face est flanqué d'une seconde figure féminine et d'une tête d'homme, tous deux de profil. Ce portrait tricéphale condense une infinité de sens foisonnants. S'il a particulièrement capté notre intérêt, c'est qu'il est aussi l'œuvre d'une femme artiste du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, la Berlinoise Charlotte Salomon (1917-1943), qui se situe explicitement dans la tradition romantique du *Gesamtkunstwerk*, soit de l'art total. Cette peinture est en effet un élément – quelque chose comme un fragment – d'un ensemble de 769 gouaches intitulé *Leben? Oder Theater?* (*Vie ? Ou théâtre ?*), une œuvre autobiographique réalisée entre les années 1940 et 1942, et conçue comme un *Singspiel*, pièce théâtrale populaire, jouée et chantée ; ici, un acte principal encadré par un prélude et un épilogue. Traits du dessin, couleurs, texte de dialogues et typographie faisant partie de la peinture, vers pour légendes ou morceaux de musique en accompagnement : toutes les formes artistiques sont intimement mêlées, de la même façon que le sont les genres dans la philosophie romantique. Cette œuvre est aujourd'hui conservée au Musée juif d'Amsterdam. Nous remercions le musée et son directeur, Emile Schrijver, de nous avoir permis d'en reproduire une des images.

Au dossier thématique accompagné d'un choix de textes des femmes écrivaines et penseuses du romantisme, ainsi qu'aux quatre *varia* déjà mentionnés, s'ajoutent deux comptes rendus et deux courtes recensions d'ouvrages, en plus d'un bulletin et agenda de l'actualité éditoriale et scientifique concernant la philosophie du romantisme allemand. Nous remercions la *SGIR Review* pour nous avoir permis de publier une version française d'un compte rendu de l'ouvrage collectif *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism* qui doit paraître en anglais dans son prochain numéro.

L'appel à contribution est ouvert pour *Symphilosophie* 3 (2021). La revue accepte pour la section *Varia* de sa troisième livraison des propositions d'articles de recherche originaux ayant trait à n'importe quel aspect de la philosophie romantique, ainsi que des comptes rendus, recensions d'ouvrage ou traductions de sources textuelles entièrement inédits. Les propositions de

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contributions seront envoyées à la rédaction jusqu'au 31 mai 2021 au plus tard.

Leif Weatherby (New York University) nous fait l'honneur et le grand plaisir d'être Rédacteur en chef invité du troisième numéro de *Symphilosophie*. Il coordonnera un dossier thématique consacré au thème « Science, technologie et premier romantisme allemand ».

Que l'ensemble des contributeurs au présent numéro et des évaluateurs extérieurs à la revue trouvent aussi ici l'expression de notre gratitude pour leur disponibilité. Merci également à Manja Kisner, Cody Staton, et David W. Wood de leur aide éditoriale, permanente et précieuse. Une occasion de dire, pour conclure, que, conformément à la raison d'être de la revue *Symphilosophie*, nous sommes bien d'accord avec ce que Jane Kneller écrit dans l'introduction de sa contribution : « La symphilosophie n'est pas simplement une option. C'est une nécessité. »

Bruxelles et Padoue, le 9 décembre 2020.

Laure Cahen-Maurel  
Giulia Valpione

## Editoriale

Questo secondo numero di *Symphilosophie* risponde ad una congiuntura: nel campo della filosofia si sta affermando, con un'intensità ci sembra inedita, un'auto-riflessione critica che interroga il modo in cui si insegna e si scrive la storia della filosofia nel suo insieme. C'è una parola d'ordine che ritorna costante e che coinvolge direttamente anche l'archivio romantico: allargare, se non cambiare, il corpus canonico di una storia del pensiero in cui le donne sono solo delle rare eccezioni, se non addirittura assenti.

Nel decennio 1980-1990 alcuni filosofi e alcune filosofe che cercavano di legare storia e filosofia hanno svolto un ruolo di pionieri/e sensibilizzando i lettori/le lettrici all'esclusione delle donne dalle sfere della ragione e della democrazia, nell'età cosiddetta moderna. Nel 1984, la filosofa australiana Genevieve Lloyd pubblica *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*;<sup>1</sup> nel 1988 esce *The Sexual Contract*<sup>2</sup> di Carole Pateman, mentre la francese Geneviève Fraisse formula il concetto di "democrazia esclusiva" nel suo libro *Musa della ragione, la democrazia esclusiva e la differenza dei sessi*<sup>3</sup>, apparso nell'anno del bicentenario della Rivoluzione Francese. Eppure, Gilles Ménage, un filologo dell'età classica francese, precettore di Madame de Sévigné et di Madame de Lafayette, aveva già messo in luce, all'alba della modernità, l'esistenza e l'importanza delle filosofe anche nell'età antica. La sua *Historia Mulierum Philosopharum (Storia delle filosofe)* del 1690, riscoperta recentemente, è complementare a *Vite, dottrine e sentenze di filosofi illustri* di Diogene Laerzio e documenta l'opera di 65 pensatrici dall'antichità classica fino all'Alto Medioevo.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*, London, Methuen & Co Ltd, 1984 (nuova ed. nel 1993 per Routledge). Si veda anche la collettanea: Genevieve Lloyd (ed.), *Feminism and the History of Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Carole Pateman, *Il contratto sessuale. I fondamenti nascosti della società moderna*, tradotto da Cinzia Biasini, Bergamo, Moretti & Vitali, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Geneviève Fraisse, *Muse de la raison, la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes*, Aix-en-Provence, Éditions Alinéa, 1989 (nuova ed. nel 1995 con il titolo: *Muse de la raison. Démocratie et exclusion des femmes en France*, Paris, Gallimard, "Folio Histoire").

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Gilles Ménage, *Storia delle donne filosofe*, tradotto da Alessia Parolotto, con un'introduzione di Chiara Zamboni, Verona, Ombre Corte, 2016. È disponibile anche la traduzione francese *Histoire des femmes philosophes*, trad. da Manuella Vaney, con un'introduzione di Claude Tarrène, Paris, Arléa, 2006 e anche una traduzione inglese: Gilles Ménage, *The History of Women Philosophers*, Lanham MD, University Press of America, 1984. In Germania, Meiner ha pubblicato l'anno scorso la prima traduzione tedesca: Gilles Ménage, *Geschichte der Philosophinnen*, a cura di Christian Kaiser, Hamburg, Meiner, 2019.



Considerare la filosofia come una “pratica congiunturale”,<sup>5</sup> per riprendere le parole di Pierre Macherey, è essenziale per fondare la legittimità, regolarmente contestata da alcuni, di una storia della filosofia. Non si tratta di filosofia in generale, ci ricorda Pierre Macherey, ma di situazioni più o meno chiaramente definite e affermate, in cui si esercita la riflessione filosofica. Pertanto, l’atto di filosofare è legato all’interrogazione storica delle condizioni e dei limiti del suo esercizio. Ciò a cui già Friedrich Schlegel si riferiva con il concetto di una storia “genetica” della filosofia: per lui, non c’è filosofia senza la sua storia e al di fuori del momento in cui noi “simfilosofiamo”.<sup>6</sup>

Walter Benjamin, che si riferiva al modello dell’*Athenaeum* per caratterizzare l’essenza di ogni rivista nei termini di “vera attualità”,<sup>7</sup> ha saputo trarre da tale concezione romantica della filosofia, e dal suo posizionamento nella congiuntura presente, dei preziosi insegnamenti sul “vero concetto di storia”:<sup>8</sup> un tempo attivamente costruito, discontinuo, qualitativamente caratterizzato e carico di attualità – ovvero l’attualizzazione redentrice dei potenziali nascosti e rivoluzionari del passato. *Symphilosophie* accoglie questa eredità. È sotto l’egida di questo spirito che la rivista intende contribuire ad una storia della filosofia romantica.

Nei nostri giorni si manifesta qualcosa di nuovo: una pratica collettiva, istituzionale e organizzata, nell’età della digitalizzazione e dei *social networks*, per ricostruire una storia delle donne nella filosofia. Così come la storiografia, da circa quarant’anni, include le donne ritrovando e scandagliando negli archivi le testimonianze sulla quotidianità della vita delle spose, madri, paesane, lavoratrici, istitutrici..., mettendo l’accento sulla loro singolarità, le loro sofferenze o le loro conquiste, al fine di riparare ai “silenzi”<sup>9</sup> del sapere storico, allo stesso modo oggi l’obiettivo è sempre più di raccogliere il maggior numero di esempi tangibili di intellettuali donne, di dare loro

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<sup>5</sup> “Entretien avec Pierre Macherey. Propos recueillis par Olivier Koettlitz”, *Le Philosophoïre*, n° 20, 2003 (2), p. 7-20, on-line, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-le-philosophoïre-2003-2-page-7.htm>, consultato il 14 novembre 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Entwicklung der Philosophie in zwölf Büchern*, in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Bd. 12, hg. von Jean-Jacques Anstett, München et al., Schöningh-Thomas, 1964, p. 162.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Annuncio della rivista “Angelus Novus”*, in Walter Benjamin, *Il concetto di critica nel Romanticismo tedesco. Scritti 1919-1922*, a cura di Giorgio Agamben, Torino, Einaudi, 1982, p. 174.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Sul concetto di storia* [1940]; l’espressione appare in una variante della Tesi I: cfr. Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, in *Werke und Nachlass*, Bd. 19, hg. von Gérard Raulet, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2010, p. 121.

<sup>9</sup> Questo termine rinvia al titolo dell’opera di Michelle Perrot, *Les femmes ou les silences de l’histoire*, Paris, Flammarion, “Champs”, 1998.

visibilità e un nome (che non sia solo quello di un marito, di un padre o di un fratello), di reintegrarle nell'insieme da cui sono state indebitamente escluse e colmare così quel silenzio che è stato loro imposto attivamente dagli storici della filosofia.<sup>10</sup>

E così il centro *History of Women Philosophers and Scientists*, creato nel 2016 all'Università di Paderborn, inizia sotto l'egida di Ruth Hagenruber e con la partecipazione attiva di filosofe da tutto il mondo (tra le quali l'americana Mary Ellen Waithe o l'australiana Karen Green) ad appoggiare, promuovere e facilitare le ricerche presenti e future concernenti le donne nella storia della filosofia, per esempio attraverso l'archivio digitale di manoscritti e altri documenti relativi a queste autrici.

Ancora, proprio quest'anno (2020), il progetto "Extending New Narratives/Pour de nouveaux récits en histoire de la philosophie", coordinato da Lisa Shapiro presso la Simon Fraser University in partenariato con una rete internazionale di 11 università, ha ottenuto il sostegno economico del Consiglio canadese per la ricerca in scienze umane. Lo scopo di tale progetto è la riscoperta non solo delle donne, ma più in generale di autori finora trascurati per aggiungere i loro nomi nella scrittura di una storia più inclusiva, dove siano rappresentati, dal Medioevo fino al 1940, la maggior parte dei settori della filosofia (la metafisica e l'epistemologia, l'etica, la filosofia sociale, politica, la filosofia dello spirito e dell'educazione).

Le cose stanno cambiando non solo nelle università. Le ricerche di eminenti specialiste del campo sono ormai pubblicate da case editrici prestigiose. I quattro volumi di *A History of Women Philosophers*<sup>11</sup> dal VII a.C. al giorno d'oggi, diretti da Mary Ellen Waithe pubblicati tra il 1987 e il 1995 possono essere considerati come degli spartiacque. Per quanto riguarda il periodo più recente, è necessario citare anche l'opera di Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1700-1800*,<sup>12</sup> così come il volume *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy* curato da Ann Garry, Serene

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<sup>10</sup> Mary Ellen Waithe, "Sex, Lies and Bigotry: The Canon of Philosophy", in Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir e Ruth Edith Hagenruber (ed.), *Methodological Reflections on Women's Contribution and Influence in the History of Philosophy*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2020, p. 3-17.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. Mary Ellen Waithe (ed.), *A History of Women Philosophers*, Vol. 1: "Ancient women philosophers, 600 B.C.-500 A.D."; Vol. 2: "Medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment women philosophers, 500-1600"; Vol. 3: "Modern Women Philosophers, 1600-1900"; Vol. 4: "Contemporary women philosophers, 1900-today", Dordrecht-Boston-London, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1987-1995.

<sup>12</sup> Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1700-1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

J. Khader e Alison Stone,<sup>13</sup> oppure, in Italia, il recente libro di Paola Rudan, *Donna. Storia e critica di un concetto polemico*.<sup>14</sup>

Si consideri anche l'importanza di alcune riviste, come *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* (fondata nel 1983 e pubblicata oggi per la Cambridge University Press) o *PhiloSOPHIA: A Journal of Transcontinental Feminism* (nata nel 2011 e pubblicata per SUNY Press).

Per quanto riguarda, più nello specifico, le donne nella tradizione filosofica tedesca del XVIII e XIX secolo, non si può non menzionare la pubblicazione imminente e concomitante, presso la Oxford University Press, di ben tre volumi: un'opera collettiva diretta da Corey W. Dyck e un manuale accompagnato da un'antologia di testi tradotti in inglese entrambi coordinati da Kristin Gjesdal e Dalia Nassar.<sup>15</sup> Nella stessa direzione, menzioniamo il ruolo pionieristico che hanno giocato le traduzioni in inglese e le ricerche sull'opera di Karoline von Günderrode elaborate da Anna C. Ezekiel.<sup>16</sup> È perciò evidente che ormai il mondo dell'editoria accademica sta giocando un ruolo importante per incrementare queste innovative ricerche.<sup>17</sup>

Lo scopo di queste iniziative non è quindi tanto quello di prendere le donne, il femminile e il genere come oggetto di pensiero, quanto quello di mostrare le donne come *soggetti* di pensiero. E, ancora, non come eccezioni ad un canone, bensì al centro di “una nuova storia del pensiero”.<sup>18</sup> È consono utilizzare, per descrivere questa nuova storia della filosofia, la doppia immagine del lignaggio e delle api forgiata da Geneviève Fraisse per caratterizzare il proprio lavoro “di genealogia della democrazia femminista”.<sup>19</sup> Infatti il lignaggio non è semplicemente la storia, finalmente resa visibile, di queste filosofe – magari verso l'impossibile assoluzione di una storia che si

<sup>13</sup> Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader, Alison Stone, *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, New York–London, Routledge, 2017; si veda in particolare, per il tema da noi qui trattato: “Part I: *Engaging the Past*”, p. 11-15.

<sup>14</sup> Paola Rudan, *Donna. Storia e critica di un concetto polemico*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> *Women and Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, ed. by Corey W. Dyck, Oxford, Oxford University Press, previsto per il 2021; *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Women Philosophers in the German Tradition* e *Women Philosophers in the Long Nineteenth Century: The German Tradition*, ed. by Kristin Gjesdal e Dalia Nassar, Oxford, Oxford University Press, entrambi previsti per il 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. Karoline von Günderrode, *Poetic Fragments*, trad. e introduzione di Anna C. Ezekiel, Albany NY, SUNY Press, 2016; e anche *Philosophical Fragments*, trad. e introduzione di Anna C. Ezekiel, New York, Oxford University Press, in preparazione.

<sup>17</sup> Certamente, le difficoltà sono ancora molto presenti. Si pensi che Rebecca Buxton (University of Oxford) e Lisa Whiting (Birkbeck, University of London) hanno dovuto fare affidamento ad un *crowd funding* per pubblicare il volume da loro coordinato: *The Philosopher Queens: The Lives and Legacies of Philosophy's Unsung Women*, Unbound, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Per riprendere il sottotitolo di un numero speciale di *Philosophie Magazin* (Sonderausgabe 13) apparso nel 2019: *Philosophinnen – Eine andere Geschichte des Denkens*.

<sup>19</sup> Geneviève Fraisse, *Féminisme et Philosophie*, Paris, Gallimard, « Folio Essais », 2020, p. 240.

pretenda oggettiva e scientifica. Esso permette anche la costruzione di un senso simbolico (inscrivere il contemporaneo in una continuità, una genealogia), epistemologico (segnalare delle problematiche di lunga durata)<sup>20</sup> e direzionale (tracciare un segno verso il futuro).<sup>21</sup> Per quanto riguarda la metafora delle api, essa serve a dire la realtà irriducibilmente “plurale e collettiva”<sup>22</sup> di quella storia, in cui ogni membro può essere salutato per la sua “singolarità produttiva”.<sup>23</sup> L’elaborazione del pensiero delle donne sarà uno spiegamento non gerarchizzato e non unitario delle molteplicità e allo stesso tempo sarà attraversato da una solidarietà profonda.

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Il presente numero di *Symphilosophie* mira dunque a contribuire a questo percorso: mettere in luce e interrogare l’apporto delle donne alla filosofia romantica. Il Primo Romanticismo Tedesco, in maniera generale, sfida già il canone della filosofia a confrontarsi con altre forme del pensiero. Al sistema preferisce la scrittura frammentaria; al formato strettamente discorsivo preferisce la varietà e il mescolamento dei generi – trattati, discorsi, dialoghi, lettere, poesie o romanzi. Si trovano quindi nel Romanticismo dei problemi metafisologici che eccedono la questione del sesso o del genere, come quello di comprendere a quali condizioni si riconosce una filosofia in quanto tale.

La recezione del Primo Romanticismo Tedesco è particolarmente indicativa del clima di sospetto e di diffidenza che caratterizza i filosofi riguardo a differenti figure ed espressioni del pensiero. Tuttavia, le ricerche sempre più numerose di questi ultimi vent’anni hanno dimostrato e ammesso il tenore filosofico rivendicato da Friedrich Schlegel e Novalis (per fare solo due nomi) per le loro opere, teoriche e letterarie, per tanto tempo trascurate sotto il pretesto di una dubbia scientificità. Alcuni di questi aspetti – razionalità, coerenza, pensiero sistematico – sono stati toccati nel nostro primo numero;<sup>24</sup> la sezione *Varia* del presente numero prolunga quella riflessione grazie alle delucidazioni di Manfred Frank, Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak, Karl Ameriks e Stefan Schick.

C’è ancora molta ricerca da fare su ciò che le donne ebbero da dire in seno ad una corrente ritenuta in anticipo sui tempi proprio perché le

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>24</sup> Cfr. *Symphilosophie* 1/2019, *Filosofia romantica e idealismo tedesco*: <https://symphilosophie.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/0-symphilosophie-1-2019-issn-complete-17-dec-2019.pdf>

includeva.<sup>25</sup> Il presente numero di *Symphilosophie* vuole offrire un contributo in questa direzione: i saggi di Jane Kneller, Anna C. Ezekiel, Catalina Elena Dobre, Bryan Norton e Giulia Valpione evidenziano e rivalutano tutti il ruolo delle donne nella storia della filosofia romantica.

L'identità delle scrittrici legate alla storia della filosofia romantica, anche quando hanno reso pubbliche le loro opere, non è sempre stata nota: infatti erano solite firmare i loro testi con uno pseudonimo. Inoltre, non tutte hanno pubblicato ciò che scrivevano, infatti alcune di loro si sono "limitate" a scrivere un diario o a intrattenere una corrispondenza epistolare; come i loro omologhi maschili, hanno fatto filosofia nei loro romanzi o poemi, ma hanno anche scritto dei testi maggiormente teorici. L'attenzione prestata ai loro scritti ha permesso e permette di affrontare anche il punto di vista dei filosofi (maschi) del Romantico Tedesco e di confrontarli con il loro Altro. Ovvero, consente di interrogare le ambiguità di un discorso maschile che impone alla condizione femminile dei determinismi naturali, e che contemporaneamente dispiega (forse senza riuscire a portarlo alle sue ultime conseguenze?) una dinamica tipicamente romantica della creazione di sé, di auto-definizione. Certo nel Romanticismo troviamo il principio di un'uguaglianza nella differenza così come di una convergenza dei generi. Però anche, all'inverso, attraverso gli scritti delle filosofe del Romanticismo possiamo comprendere fino a che punto esse, in quanto pensatrici della libertà e dell'emancipazione, possano anche essere viste come pensatrici dell'uguaglianza tra i sessi. Inoltre, questa ricerca consente di comprendere come loro si posizionavano in rapporto alla problematica distinzione tra l'ambito privato del sentimento e l'ambito pubblico del politico. Ciò detto, speriamo risulti evidente che questo numero è in linea con il femminismo che rivede la storia della filosofia per proporre una storia complementare, piuttosto che opposta, alla storia dominante della tradizione essenzialmente maschile.

Per permettere di dare la parola alle filosofe del Romanticismo abbiamo deciso di accompagnare gli articoli del dossier tematico ad una piccola antologia di testi tradotti. Questa selezione contiene materiali spesso ignorati sia da filosofi che da commentatori. A fronte delle varie traduzioni (in inglese, francese e italiano) forniamo anche il testo originale in tedesco. I brevi scritti

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<sup>25</sup> Certamente, questa tematica non è completamente nuova, ma necessita di essere ulteriormente approfondita, ed è ciò che cerca di fare il dossier qui pubblicato, che fruisce di alcune ricerche già compiute sia nel campo della filosofia che della germanistica. Si pensi, ad esempio, all'antologia diretta da Jochen Schulte-Sasse, *Theory as Practice. A Critical Anthology of German Romantic Writings* (1997), ma anche ai lavori di Jane Kneller, Alison Stone, Adrian Daub, Anne Pollok, Barbara Becker-Cantarino o ancora Elena Agazzi.

tradotti in questo numero di *Symphilosophie* sono di Caroline Michaelis-Schlegel, Dorothea Veit, Bettina von Arnim, Sophie Mereau, la *salonnière* berlinese Rahel Levin-Varnhagen e Karoline von Günderrode. Anna C. Ezekiel ci ha generosamente donato per questa raccolta una bella traduzione inglese della poesia di Günderrode *Eine persische Erzählung*: cogliamo l'occasione per ringraziarla sinceramente.

La copertina di questo secondo numero contiene la rappresentazione di una figura tricefala, in cui una donna si mostra di fronte all'osservatore ed è adiacente ai visi di un'altra donna e di un uomo, visti di profilo. Questa immagine è l'opera di un'artista del XX secolo, la berlinese Charlotte Salomon, che colloca esplicitamente le proprie creazioni nella tradizione romantica del *Gesamtkunstwerk*, ovvero dell'arte totale. Questo dipinto autobiografico è un frammento di una serie di 769 tempere intitolato *Leben? Oder Theater? (Vita? Oppure teatro?)* realizzata da quest'artista tra gli anni 1940 e 1942, e concepita come un *Singspiel*, ovvero un'opera teatrale popolare recitata e cantata; qui, un atto principale incorniciato da un preludio e da un epilogo. Tratti disegnati, colori, testi di dialoghi e tipografie fanno parte del dipinto, e sono accompagnati da versi o arie cantate: tutte queste forme artistiche sono intrecciate intimamente, così come lo sono i generi nella filosofia romantica. Questa opera è oggi conservata al Museo ebraico di Amsterdam. Ringraziamo il museo e il suo direttore, Emile Schrijver, di averci concesso di riprodurre un'immagine.

Al dossier tematico, alla raccolta di testi di filosofe del Romanticismo e ai quattro testi della parte miscelanea di questo numero di *Symphilosophie* si aggiungono anche due "Note", due recensioni e un bollettino con una selezione delle ultime pubblicazioni ed edizioni (così come una selezione di conferenze e seminari futuri) concernenti la filosofia romantica tedesca. Ringraziamo la *SGIR Review* di averci permesso di pubblicare una versione francese della "Nota" sulla collettanea *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*, che apparirà in inglese prossimamente.

La *Call for Paper* per il terzo numero di *Symphilosophie* (2021) è aperta e si chiuderà il 31 maggio 2021. Il dossier tematico verterà su "Scienza, tecnologia e Primo Romanticismo Tedesco". Leif Weatherby (New York University) ci farà l'onore di esserne il coordinatore. Anche per il terzo numero la rivista accetta tuttavia ogni proposta di articolo originale (per la sezione *Miscellanea*), di recensione o di traduzione inedite riguardanti qualsiasi aspetto della filosofia romantica.

In guisa di conclusione, esprimiamo qui la nostra gratitudine a tutti gli autori pubblicati in questo numero e a tutti i valutatori esterni alla rivista: li ringraziamo per il loro interesse espresso nei confronti di *Symphilosophie* e per

## EDITORIALE

la loro disponibilità. Ringraziamo inoltre Manja Kisner, Cody Staton e David W. Wood per il loro permanente e prezioso aiuto editoriale. Ci si conceda di chiudere questa nostra prefazione esprimendo la nostra consonanza con quanto Jane Kneller scrive nell'introduzione al suo articolo qui pubblicato a proposito della questione femminista (e non solo): "La simfilosofia non è semplicemente un'opzione. È una necessità".

Bruxelles e Padova, 9 dicembre 2020

Laure Cahen-Maurel  
Giulia Valpione



## Editorial

Die zweite Ausgabe von *Symphilosophie* ist eine Reaktion auf die in der Philosophie derzeit mit neuer Intensität unternommene kritische Selbstbefragung, wie die Geschichte der Philosophie geschrieben und gelehrt werden soll. Die Neubewertung dieser Fragen betrifft auch unmittelbar die Forschung zur philosophischen Romantik und somit die Frage, ob der kanonische Korpus der Geistesgeschichte, in dem Frauen – von seltenen Ausnahmen abgesehen – oft nicht vorkommen, erweitert oder gar verändert werden sollte.

In den 1980er Jahren haben vor allem Philosophinnen, die an der Schnittstelle von Geschichte und Philosophie arbeiteten, auf den Ausschluss der Frauen aus den Sphären der Vernunft und der Demokratie aufmerksam gemacht – sogar im sogenannten Zeitalter der Moderne. Genevieve Lloyd veröffentlichte 1984 *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*<sup>1</sup>; Carole Pateman publizierte 1988 *The Sexual Contract*<sup>2</sup> und Geneviève Fraisse prägte in ihrem Buch *Muse de la raison, la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes (Muse der Vernunft, die exklusive Demokratie und die Differenz der Geschlechter)*, das 1989, im 200sten Jubiläumsjahr der Französischen Revolution, erschien, den Begriff der „exklusiven Demokratie“<sup>3</sup>. Ein Philologe der französischen Klassik, Gilles Ménage, Hauslehrer von Madame de Sévigné und Madame de Lafayette, hatte bereits 1690 begonnen auf die Existenz und Bedeutung zahlreicher Philosophinnen hinzuweisen. Seine *Historia Mulierum Philosopharum (Geschichte der Philosophinnen)*, die das Werk von 65 Denkerinnen von der Antike bis zum frühen Mittelalter dokumentiert und sich als Gegenstück zu Diogenes Laertius' *Leben und Meinungen berühmter Philosophen* verstehen lässt, geriet jedoch weitgehend in Vergessenheit.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*. London, 1984; Nachdruck 1993. Siehe auch: *Feminism and the History of Philosophy*, hrsg. v. Genevieve Lloyd. Oxford, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*. Cambridge, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Geneviève Fraisse, *Muse de la raison, la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes*. Aix-en-Provence, 1989. Neue Ausgabe unter dem Titel: *Muse de la raison. Démocratie et exclusion des femmes en France*. Paris, 1995. Englische Übersetzung: *Reason's Muse: Sexual Difference and the Birth of Democracy*, übers. v. Jane Marie Todd. Chicago, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Im Meiner Verlag ist neulich die erste deutsche Ausgabe erschienen. Siehe: Gilles Ménage, *Geschichte der Philosophinnen*, hrsg. v. Christian Kaiser. Hamburg, 2019. Englische Übersetzung: Gilles Ménage, *The History of Women Philosophers*. Lanham, MD, 1984. Französische Übersetzung: Gilles Ménage, *Histoire des femmes philosophes*, übers. v. Manuella Vaney. Paris, 2006. Italienische Übersetzung: Gilles Ménage, *Storia delle donne filosofe*, übers. v. Alessia Parolotto. Verona, 2016.

Das Verständnis der Philosophie als – wie Pierre Macherey sagte – „konjunkturelle Praxis“<sup>5</sup>, ist unabdingbar, um die Legitimität einer regelmäßig umstrittenen Geschichte der Philosophie zu etablieren. Macherey behauptet, dass es keine Philosophie in einem absoluten Sinne gibt, sondern dass sie in mehr oder weniger klar definierten und spezifischen Situationen zu finden ist, in denen philosophische Reflexion vollzogen wird. Demnach ist der Akt des Philosophierens untrennbar mit der historischen Untersuchung der Bedingungen und Grenzen seiner Ausübung verbunden. Diesen Aspekt hatte bereits Friedrich Schlegel mit dem Begriff einer „genetischen“ Geschichte der Philosophie herausgestellt; für ihn existiert, wenn wir „symphilosophieren“, die Philosophie nicht außerhalb ihrer eigenen Geschichte oder Zeit.<sup>6</sup> Walter Benjamin sah in der romantischen Zeitschrift *Athenaeum* ein Vorbild für alle Zeitschriften, gerade weil sie in der Lage war, die „wahre Aktualität“ zu bekunden.<sup>7</sup> Bewusst zog er aus der romantischen Konzeption der Philosophie eine Reihe von wertvollen Lektionen über den „wahren Begriff der Geschichte“<sup>8</sup>: Historische Zeit ist aktiv konstruiert, diskontinuierlich, qualitativ und für die Gegenwart von Bedeutung. – Das heißt, dass sie die verborgenen und revolutionären Potentiale der Vergangenheit erlösend in die Gegenwart überträgt. Die Zeitschrift *Symphilosophie* will dieses Erbe fortsetzen und in diesem Sinne einen Beitrag zur Geschichte der romantischen Philosophie zu leisten versuchen.

Was heute, im Zeitalter digitaler Medien und sozialer Online-Netzwerke neu ist, ist dass kollektive, institutionelle und organisierte Praktiken entwickelt werden, die die Geschichte von Frauen in der Philosophie rekonstruieren. In den letzten vierzig Jahren hat die Geschichtsschreibung zunehmend die Geschichte von Frauen dokumentiert und die Zeugnisse über ihr Leben und ihre Arbeit gesammelt. Um die historischen Lücken oder das „Schweigen“<sup>9</sup> zu füllen, hebt sie die Einzigartigkeit, die Leiden und die Erfolge dieser Frauen hervor. Sie katalogisiert sie nicht mehr

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<sup>5</sup> „Entretien avec Pierre Macherey. Propos recueillis par Olivier Koettlitz“, *Le Philosophoire*, n° 20, 2003 (2), S. 7-20, online: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-le-philosophoire-2003-2-page-7.htm>, abgerufen am 14. November 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Entwicklung der Philosophie in zwölf Büchern*, in: *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Bd. 12, hg. v. Jean-Jacques Anstett. München et al., 1964. S. 162.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, „Ankündigung der Zeitschrift: *Angelus Novus*“, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, unter Mitwirkung von Theodor W. Adorno hg. v. Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt a.M., 1977. Bd. II/1, S. 241.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* [1940]; der Ausdruck befindet sich in einer Variante der These I: siehe *Werke und Nachlass. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 19, hg. v. Gérard Raulet. Berlin, 2010. S. 121.

<sup>9</sup> Dieses Wort bezieht sich auf den Titel des Buches von Michelle Perrot, *Les femmes ou les silences de l'histoire*. Paris, 1998.

einfach als Ehefrauen oder Mütter, sondern als eigenständige Individuen. In ähnlicher Weise ist es eines der Ziele der aktuellen Forschung, konkrete Beispiele von Philosophinnen zu sammeln, ihnen Sichtbarkeit und einen Namen zu geben, der nicht nur der ihres Mannes ist; ihre Stimmen zu verstärken, nachdem sie von Philosophiehistorikern häufig verschwiegen wurden, und sie wieder in die gesamte Geschichte des Denkens zu integrieren.<sup>10</sup>

Das ist auch eines der Ziele des Forschungszentrums „History of Women Philosophers and Scientists“, das 2016 an der Universität Paderborn in Deutschland unter der Leitung von Ruth Hagengruber gegründet wurde. Unter aktiver Beteiligung von Philosophinnen aus aller Welt, darunter der US-Amerikanerin Mary Ellen Waithe und der Australierin Karen Green, fördert und erleichtert dieses Zentrum die gegenwärtige und zukünftige Forschung zu Frauen in der Geschichte der Philosophie, etwa durch sein digitales Archiv von Manuskripten und anderen Dokumenten. Darüber hinaus wurde 2020 das Projekt „Extending New Narratives / Pour de nouveaux récits en histoire de la philosophie“ unter der Leitung der Philosophin Lisa Shapiro an der Simon Fraser University in Zusammenarbeit mit einem internationalen Netzwerk von 11 Universitäten durch den *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada* gefördert. Das Ziel ist die Wiederentdeckung von Philosophinnen und vernachlässigten Autoren durch Aufnahme ihrer Werke und Namen in eine inklusivere Geschichtsschreibung. Dieses Projekt umfasst die meisten Bereiche der Philosophie (Metaphysik, Erkenntnistheorie, Ethik, soziale und politische Philosophie, Philosophie des Geistes und der Bildung) vom Mittelalter bis 1940.

Diese Neubewertung findet nicht nur an den Universitäten statt. Die Arbeiten herausragender Spezialistinnen auf diesem Gebiet sind nun auch in angesehenen akademischen Verlagen zugänglich. Die vier Bände<sup>11</sup> von *A History of Women Philosophers*, herausgegeben von Mary Ellen Waithe (erschieden zwischen 1987 und 1995), stellen eine bahnbrechende Studie dar. Zu den neueren wichtigen Werken gehören: Karen Greens 2014 erschienenes *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1700-1800*

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<sup>10</sup> Vgl. Mary Ellen Waithe, „Sex, Lies and Bigotry: The Canon of Philosophy“, in: Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir und Ruth Edith Hagengruber (Hg.), *Methodological Reflections on Women's Contribution and Influence in the History of Philosophy*. Dordrecht, 2020, S. 3-17.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Ellen Waithe (Hg.), *A History of Women Philosophers*, Vol. 1: „Ancient women philosophers, 600 B.C.-500 A.D.“; Vol. 2: „Medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment women philosophers, 500-1600“; Vol. 3: „Modern Women Philosophers, 1600-1900“; Vol. 4: „Contemporary women philosophers, 1900-today“. Dordrecht/Boston/London, 1987-1995.

(Cambridge University Press)<sup>12</sup>, *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, herausgegeben von Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader und Alison Stone<sup>13</sup>, und Paola Rudans letzter Band *Donna. Storia e critica di un concetto polemico*.<sup>14</sup> Und natürlich gibt es inzwischen auch bedeutende akademische Zeitschriften wie *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* (gegründet 1983, veröffentlicht bei Cambridge University Press) oder *PhiloSOPHIA: A Journal of Transcontinental Feminism* (gegründet 2011, erscheint bei SUNY Press). Im Hinblick auf Frauen in der deutschen philosophischen Tradition des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts ist auf die bevorstehenden Veröffentlichungen von drei Bänden bei Oxford University Press hinzuweisen: einen Sammelband, herausgegeben von Cory W. Dyck, eine Sammlung von Aufsätzen und eine Anthologie von Übersetzungen, die zwei letzteren herausgegeben von Kristin Gjesdal und Dalia Nassar.<sup>15</sup> Zugleich sollte auch die wegweisende Arbeit von Anna C. Ezekiel hervorgehoben werden, die Karoline von Günderrodes Denken erläutert und ins Englische übersetzt.<sup>16</sup> Neben dem innovativen Forschen, Schreiben und Übersetzen spielt also auch die Welt des akademischen Publizierens eine immer größere Rolle.<sup>17</sup>

Das Ziel dieser Initiativen ist es nicht so sehr Frauen, bzw. das Weibliche oder das Geschlecht, als Objekte des Denkens wahrzunehmen, sondern Frauen als *Subjekte* des Denkens zu zeigen. Sie also nicht am Rande des Kanons als Ausnahmen darzustellen, sondern sie in den Fokus und das Zentrum einer „anderen Geschichte des Denkens“ zu stellen.<sup>18</sup> Das Doppelbild von Abstammung und Bienen, mit dem Geneviève Fraisse ihre

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<sup>12</sup> Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1700-1800*. Cambridge, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, herausgegeben von Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader und Alison Stone. New York/London, 2017. Insbesondere "Part I: Engaging the Past", 11-15.

<sup>14</sup> Paola Rudan, *Donna. Storia e critica di un concetto polemico*. Bologna, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> *Women and Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, herausgegeben von Corey W. Dyck. Oxford, erscheint im Juni 2021; *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Women Philosophers in the German Tradition* herausgegeben von Kristin Gjesdal und Dalia Nassar. Oxford, erscheint 2021; und *Women Philosophers in the Long Nineteenth Century: The German Tradition*, herausgegeben von Kristin Gjesdal and Dalia Nassar. Oxford, erscheint 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Karoline von Günderrode, *Poetic Fragments*, übersetzt und eingeleitet von Anna C. Ezekiel. Albany NY, 2016; siehe auch: *Philosophical Fragments*, translated and introduced by Anna C. Ezekiel. New York, im Erscheinen.

<sup>17</sup> Natürlich muss noch mehr getan werden. Um nur ein Beispiel zu nennen: die jüngste Veröffentlichung von *The Philosopher Queens: The Lives and Legacies of Philosophy's Unsung Women* (nicht gebunden, 2020), herausgegeben von Rebecca Buxton (University of Oxford) und Lisa Whiting (Birkbeck, University of London), musste sich auf Crowdfunding verlassen, um veröffentlicht zu werden.

<sup>18</sup> Um den Untertitel der Sonderausgabe 2019 des *Philosophie Magazins* (Sonderausgabe 13) zu zitieren: „Philosophinnen - Eine andere Geschichte des Denkens“.

eigene Arbeit über die „Genealogie der feministischen Demokratie“ charakterisiert, könnte auf diese andere Geschichte der Frauen in der Philosophie angewendet werden.<sup>19</sup> Das Konzept der Abstammung zielt nicht nur darauf ab, die Geschichte dieser Philosophinnen objektiver und wissenschaftlicher darzustellen, sondern erlaubt auch die Konstruktion eines symbolischen Sinns (das Gegenwärtige in eine Kontinuität, eine Genealogie zu setzen), eines erkenntnistheoretischen Sinns (Identifizierung „langfristiger Probleme“<sup>20</sup>) und eines Richtungssinns („in die Zukunft deuten“<sup>21</sup>). Die Bienenmetapher dient dazu, die irreduzibel „plurale und kollektive“<sup>22</sup> Realität dieser Geschichte zum Ausdruck zu bringen, in der jede Protagonistin für ihre „produktive Singularität“<sup>23</sup> gelobt werden kann. Die weibliche Ausarbeitung des Denkens wäre eine nicht-hierarchische, nicht-einheitliche Entfaltung von Mannigfaltigkeiten, die zugleich eine tiefe Solidarität aufweist.

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Die Frühromantik steht insgesamt schon wegen ihrer anderen Denk- und Darstellungsweise im Widerspruch zum herkömmlichen philosophischen Kanon. Anstelle des Buchstabens eines allumfassenden Systems bevorzugt sie das Schreiben von Fragmenten; den streng diskursiven Formaten zieht sie die Vielfalt von Gattungen und künstlerischen Darstellungen vor, darunter Abhandlungen, Diskurse, Dialoge, Briefe, Gedichte oder Romane. Dabei entstehen metaphilosophische Probleme, die über bloße Fragen des sozialen oder biologischen Geschlechts hinausgehen. Probleme etwa, die sich auf die Bedingungen beziehen, unter denen ein Text als philosophisch erkannt und eingestuft werden kann. Am Beispiel der Frühromantik zeigt sich besonders illustrativ ein Klima des Misstrauens und der Vorurteile, die viele Kommentatoren und Philosophiehistoriker gegenüber jenen abweichenden Denkweisen schüren. Die aufblühende Forschung der letzten zwanzig Jahre hat jedoch einige dieser Vorurteile abgebaut, indem sie den fruchtbaren philosophischen Gehalt der theoretischen und literarischen Schriften von Friedrich Schlegel und Novalis (um nur diese beiden hervorzuheben), die wegen ihrer scheinbar fehlenden Systematik lange vernachlässigt wurden, kritisch aufgezeigt hat. Die erste Ausgabe von *Symphilosophie* 2019 versuchte weitere Belege für die Rationalität, Neuartigkeit und Kohärenz des früh-

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<sup>19</sup> Geneviève Fraisse, *Féminisme et Philosophie*. Paris, 2020, S. 240.

<sup>20</sup> Ebd.

<sup>21</sup> Ebd.

<sup>22</sup> Ebd.

<sup>23</sup> Ebd., S. 241.

romantischen Denkens im Verhältnis zu den Philosophien Kants und der deutschen Idealisten zu präsentieren.<sup>24</sup> Die Sektion „Varia“ in der vorliegenden zweiten Ausgabe erweitert diese früheren Überlegungen mit neuen kritischen Beiträgen von Karl Ameriks, Stefan Schick, Manfred Frank und Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak.

Was es noch tiefer zu erforschen gilt, ist unterdessen, was Frauen in der deutschen Romantik zu sagen haben – d.h. innerhalb einer Bewegung, die ihrer Zeit gerade deswegen voraus war, weil sie Frauen einschloss.<sup>25</sup> Die vorliegende Ausgabe 2 von *Symphilosophie* versucht einen neuen weiteren Beitrag zu diesem Thema zu leisten: Die Forschungsartikel von Jane Kneller, Anna C. Ezekiel, Catalina Elena Dobre, Bryan Norton und Giulia Valpione beleuchten und überdenken die Rolle der Frauen in der Geschichte der romantischen Philosophie. Die Schriftstellerinnen der philosophischen Romantik haben bei der Veröffentlichung ihrer Werke ihre Identität nicht immer angegeben; manche verwendeten Pseudonyme, andere haben ‚nur‘ Tagebücher geführt oder Korrespondenz betrieben. Doch wie ihre männlichen Kollegen haben sie oft philosophische Motive in ihre Briefe, Romane oder Gedichte eingebaut und auch theoretische Texte verfasst. Die Neubetrachtung ihrer Schriften ermöglicht es uns, den Standpunkt der Männer in der deutschen Romantik mit dem „Anderen“ zu konfrontieren. Sie erlaubt eine Infragestellung der Zweideutigkeiten des männlichen Diskurses, der dem Weiblichen eine natürliche Determiniertheit auferlegte, während er auf die typisch romantische Dynamik der Selbsterschaffung oder Selbstdefinition setzte, aber vielleicht ohne sie zu ihren letzten Konsequenzen ausweiten zu können. Hier finden wir das Prinzip der Angleichung der biologischen Geschlechter, das zugleich die Unterschiede und Konvergenz der sozialen Geschlechter beibehält. So lässt sich einerseits feststellen, inwieweit diese Schriftstellerinnen – als Freiheits- und Emanzipationsdenkerinnen – als Vorläuferinnen der modernen Gleichberechtigung der Geschlechter zu sehen sind; andererseits lassen sich ihre Ansichten bezüglich des Unterschieds zwischen dem privaten Bereich des Gefühls und dem öffentlichen Bereich der Politik erörtern. Diese Ausgabe steht im Einklang

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<sup>24</sup> Siehe *Symphilosophie: International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism* 1 (2019) zum Thema: „Philosophical Romanticism and German idealism“: <https://symphilosophie.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/0-symphilosophie-1-2019-issn-complete-17-dec-2019.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Natürlich ist zu diesem Thema schon viel gemacht worden. Unsere aktuelle Ausgabe 2 versucht an frühere Forschungen sowohl im Bereich der Philosophie als auch der Germanistik anzuknüpfen. Siehe u.a. den Sammelband, herausgegeben von Jochen Schulte-Sasse, *Theory as Practice. A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings* (1997), ebenso wie die Publikationen von Jane Kneller, Alison Stone, Anne Pollok, Adrian Daub, Barbara Becker-Cantarino, oder Elena Agazzi.

mit dem Ansatz des Feminismus, der die Geschichte der Philosophie neu untersucht, um dadurch eine Geschichte anzubieten, die die überwiegend männlich dominierte Geschichte konstruktiv ergänzt, ohne ihr entgegengesetzt zu sein.

Um die singulären Stimmen der Frauen der philosophischen Romantik hörbar zu machen, werden die Artikel im thematischen Hauptteil von einer kleinen Auswahl von Übersetzungen begleitet. Diese Auswahl von Primärquellen und Übersetzungen beinhaltet Materialien, die von Philosophen und Kommentatoren oft ignoriert werden. Wir haben diese Auswahl *en face* geordnet, d.h. die englische, französische oder italienische Übersetzung steht auf der Seite direkt gegenüber dem deutschen Originaltext. Enthalten sind Übersetzungen von Texten von Caroline Michaelis/Schlegel, Dorothea Veit, Bettina von Arnim, Sophie Mereau, der Berliner *Salonnière* Rahel Levin/Varnhagen und Karoline von Günderrode. Anna C. Ezekiel hat uns großzügigerweise eine schöne neue englische Übertragung von Günderrodes Gedicht „Eine persische Erzählung“ für diese Sammlung zur Verfügung gestellt: Wir danken ihr herzlich dafür.

Das Titelbild dieser zweiten Ausgabe von *Symphilosophie* zeigt ein dreiteiliges Porträt, bei dem ein Frauengesicht dem Betrachter entgegenblickt und an das Gesicht einer Frau und eines Mannes im Profil angrenzt. Es stammt von der Berliner Künstlerin Charlotte Salomon (1917-1943), die dieses Werk ausdrücklich in die romantische Tradition des Gesamtkunstwerks stellt. Das autobiografische Gemälde ist ein Fragment aus einer Reihe von 769 Gouachen mit dem Titel *Leben? Oder Theater?*, die die Künstlerin zwischen 1940 und 1942 erstellte. In dieser Reihe wird der Hauptakt von einem Vor- und einem Nachspiel umrahmt und ist als ein Singspiel konzipiert, ein populäres Theaterstück, das gespielt und gesungen wird. Die Verwendung von Zeichen, Farben, Dialogen und Typografien sowie von Versen, die als Bildunterschriften fungieren, und durch verschiedene musikalische Ausschnitte begleitet sind – all diese Formen sind künstlerisch miteinander verwoben, so wie in der romantischen Philosophie und Literatur verschiedene Genres miteinander verwoben sind. Dieses Kunstwerk ist im Jüdischen Museum in Amsterdam ausgestellt. Wir danken dem Museum und seinem Direktor, Emile Schrijver, herzlich für die freundliche Genehmigung, dieses Gemälde auf unserem Cover abzubilden.

Neben den Forschungsartikeln zu den Schriftstellerinnen der philosophischen Romantik, einer Auswahl von Übersetzungen und den oben erwähnten vier „Varia“ Artikeln enthält diese zweite Ausgabe von *Symphilosophie* auch zwei Rezensionen, zwei Buchbesprechungen und schließt mit der Rubrik „Mitteilungen“ – unserem Bulletin, das die neuesten

## EDITORIAL

Publikationen, Editionen und Konferenzen zur deutschen romantischen Philosophie auflistet. Wir danken der *SGIR-Review* für die Erlaubnis, die französische Version der Besprechung des Bandes *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism* zu veröffentlichen. Die englische Version dieses Textes wird in Kürze in der *SGIR Review* erscheinen.

Der Call for Papers für die dritte Ausgabe von *Symphilosophie* (2021) ist nun eröffnet. Für diese Ausgabe nehmen wir insbesondere die Einreichungen von Original-Forschungsartikeln für die „Varia“ Sektion der Zeitschrift an. Diese Forschungsartikel können sich mit allen Themen befassen, die mit der Philosophie der deutschen Romantik in Verbindung stehen. Darüber hinaus sind Rezensionen, Buchbesprechungen und Neuübersetzungen von Primärquellen willkommen. Der Einsendeschluss ist der 31. Mai 2021.

Auch freuen wir uns sehr, Leif Weatherby (New York University) als Gastredakteur von *Symphilosophie* 3 (2021) ankündigen zu können. Er wird für den Hauptteil der Zeitschrift verantwortlich sein, der dem Sonderthema „Wissenschaft, Technik und die deutsche Frühromantik“ gewidmet ist.

Abschließend möchten wir allen AutorInnen der aktuellen Ausgabe sowie den externen GutachterInnen für ihre großzügige Bereitschaft und ihr Interesse an *Symphilosophie* unseren tiefen Dank aussprechen. Vielen Dank auch an Manja Kisner, Cody Staton und David W. Wood für ihre äußerst wertvolle redaktionelle Unterstützung. Was die *Raison d'Être* dieser neuen Zeitschrift *Symphilosophie* betrifft, so möchten wir abschließend noch unsere völlige Übereinstimmung mit Jane Knellers Gedanke aus der Einleitung ihres Artikels zum Ausdruck bringen: „Symphilosophie ist nicht nur eine Option. Sie ist eine Notwendigkeit.“

Brüssel und Padua, 9. Dezember 2020.

Laure Cahen-Maurel  
Giulia Valpione



**Research Articles**

**Articles**

**Saggi**

**Abhandlungen**



# Symphilosophie

*Revue internationale de philosophie romantique*

## Symphilosophie, le genre et la socialité dans le premier romantisme allemand

*Jane Kneller\**

### RESUME

S'inscrivant dans une perspective féministe, cet article présente un aperçu du rôle joué par les femmes dans l'accomplissement mais aussi la théorisation du projet « symphilosophique » propre au premier romantisme allemand. Partant du renouvellement, lié à l'histoire personnelle de ces femmes, de la pratique du salon comme espace de culture transcendant – du moins idéalement – les genres et les classes sociales, il étudie l'inscription novatrice de la socialité dans l'essence même de la philosophie, tout en montrant ce qu'il y eut de problématique dans les rapports des femmes (Caroline Michaelis/Schlegel et Dorothea Veit/Schlegel) avec le cénacle d'Iéna. L'article s'achève par une réflexion sur la valorisation éthique (à défaut d'être politique) de l'éducation et de la liberté des femmes dans la théorie romantique. L'art de la conversation, que l'*Essai d'une théorie du comportement sociable* (1799) de Schleiermacher théorise comme un dispositif éthique permettant l'institution d'une « libre socialité », a pour conséquence que les femmes sont les mieux placées pour fonder et présider cette forme de communauté idéale.

*Mots clés* : symphilosophie, socialité, conversation, Henriette Herz, Caroline Michaelis, Dorothea Veit, Schleiermacher

### ABSTRACT

This article presents from a feminist perspective an overview of the role played by women in both the realisation and theorising of the “symphilosophical” project of early German Romanticism. Starting from the renewal (related to the personal history of these women) of the practice of the salon as a cultural space transcending – at least ideally – gender and social class, it examines how sociability is innovatively integrated into the nature of philosophy, while acknowledging the problematic relationship of women (Caroline Michaelis/Schlegel and Dorothea Veit/Schlegel) with the Jena Romantic Circle. It concludes with a reflection on the ethical valorization of women's education and freedom in romantic theory. In his *Essay on a Theory of Social Behavior* (1799) Schleiermacher argues that the art of conversation has an ethical function permitting the institution of a form of “free sociability”. This consequently shows that women are better placed to found and preside over this ideal community.

*Keywords*: symphilosophy, sociability, conversation, Henriette Herz, Caroline Michaelis, Dorothea Veit, Schleiermacher

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\* Professeure émérite, Département de philosophie, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523, United States – Jane.Kneller@colostate.edu

## 1. Introduction : « symphilosopher » aujourd'hui

Le paysage social et politique dans lequel nous nous trouvons « symphilosopher » actuellement s'est modifié, pour ne pas dire détérioré, de façon spectaculaire ces dix dernières années<sup>1</sup>. Cette évolution défie fortement la vision du premier romantisme allemand sur la « symphilosophie<sup>2</sup> ». Il y a dix ans, je pouvais espérer que les féministes d'aujourd'hui sauront ce que cette théorie a de meilleur. Et pourtant force est de constater que l'oppression des femmes est toujours un fléau à travers le monde et qu'elle continue à prendre des formes nouvelles et inquiétantes que les penseurs révolutionnaires des années 1790 n'avaient pas imaginées. Certes, le féminisme est de nos jours plus fort qu'il n'a jamais été : il est multiracial, multiculturel, il inclut tout l'arc-en-ciel du spectre des genres, s'attache à combattre les dures réalités de classe et les difficultés économiques énormes auxquelles les femmes sont partout confrontées. Mais en même temps, la pandémie actuelle, qui fait des ravages à l'échelle de la planète, la montée en puissance des nationalismes radicaux et d'une intolérance religieuse extrême (pour ne citer que quelques-uns des problèmes) peuvent donner l'impression qu'il est utopique d'espérer une parole empreinte de civilité et de sociabilité.

Ma conviction est que la doctrine et la pratique féministes doivent réinventer et développer le travail symphilosophique, soit la production d'un discours rationnel entre personnes en sympathie les unes avec les autres, non comme une aspiration inscrite à l'horizon d'un temps long mais comme un

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<sup>1</sup> Note des éditeurs : le présent texte a été soumis tardivement à la revue *Symphilosophie* du fait de circonstances particulières et exceptionnelles ; il a été évalué par le comité de rédaction, qui l'a accepté pour publication.

<sup>2</sup> Voir notamment le fragment 147 des « Poéticisms » de Novalis : « Die Möglichkeit der Philosophie beruht auf der Möglichkeit Gedanken *nach Regeln* hervorzubringen – wahrhaft gemeinschaftlich zu denken. / Kunst zu symphilosophieren / Ist gemeinschaftliches Denken möglich, so ist ein gemeinschaftlicher Wille, die Realisierung großer, neuer Ideen möglich. » (Novalis, « Poéticisms », Frag. 147, *Vorarbeiten zu verschiedenen Fragmentsammlungen*, in Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, historisch-kritische Ausgabe [= HKA] in sechs Bänden, hg. von Paul Kluckhohn, Richard Samuel, Hans-Joachim Mähl und Gerhard Schulz *et al.*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1960-... , Bd. 2, p. 558-559) ; « La possibilité de la philosophie repose sur la possibilité de produire des pensées *d'après des règles* – et de penser véritablement en commun. / Art de symphilosopher / Si une pensée en commun est possible, alors une volonté commune, la réalisation de grandes et nouvelles idées le sont également. » (Novalis, « Poéticisms », frag. 147, in *Semences*, trad. fr. Olivier Schefer, Paris, Éditions Allia, 2004, p. 156). Voir également la traduction anglaise inédite par David W. Wood de douze lettres de la correspondance du cénacle d'Iéna, émaillées d'allusions à la pratique symphilosophique : *Twelve Letters from the Romantic Circle (1798-1799)*, trans. David W. Wood, *Symphilosophie: International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism* 1 (2019), p. 167-190. Sur ce point, on se reportera aussi aux analyses de Denis Thouard dans l'*Avant-propos* à Denis Thouard (dir.), *Symphilosophie. F. Schlegel à Iéna*, Paris, Vrin, 2002, en particulier p. 11-12.

objectif à poursuivre concrètement, ici et maintenant. Les féministes, à tous les étages, des plus hautes sphères du gouvernement aux espaces ordinaires – et par conséquent cruciaux – de nos vies quotidiennes et individuelles, doivent développer et nourrir ce travail avec le sentiment qu’il y a urgence. La symphilosophie n’est pas simplement une option. C’est une nécessité.

Le mouvement philosophique et littéraire connu sous le nom de *premier romantisme allemand* (*Frühromantik*) est surtout associé aux frères August Wilhelm et Friedrich Schlegel, avec la collaboration étroite de Friedrich v. Hardenberg (Novalis), Friedrich Schleiermacher et d’autres philosophes et figures littéraires des années 1790. Le premier romantisme s’est distingué d’autres mouvements philosophiques à bien des égards. Une des raisons est qu’un certain nombre de femmes furent une source d’inspiration et de soutien décisive pour son fonctionnement et pour sa persistance, comme elles jouèrent d’ailleurs aussi un rôle dans son déclin. La nature genrée du premier romantisme allemand prête, à première vue, à une appropriation par les féministes, mais, comme l’ont montré presque toutes les tentatives allant dans ce sens, il y a d’énormes obstacles à une telle entreprise<sup>3</sup>. Dans ce qui suit, j’examinerai ce qu’il y eut de problématique et de progressiste au sein de ce courant au vu des exigences du temps présent : non pas simplement ce qui me paraît prometteur dans le premier romantisme allemand mais ce qu’il est urgent que les féministes s’approprient à nouveau aujourd’hui, au commencement d’un autre siècle mouvementé.

## 2. La culture du salon

Au cours de la dernière décennie du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, des femmes ont fait partie intégrante de la vie intellectuelle de Berlin et d’Iéna. Leur rôle fut crucial, non par le nombre d’intellectuelles engagées dans les débats et les discussions de l’époque, ni parce que ces intellectuelles étaient en mesure d’y participer pleinement, sur un pied d’égalité – loin de là. Leur apport significatif au

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<sup>3</sup> Voir entre autres : Barbara Becker-Cantarino, « “Feminismus” und “Emanzipation”? Zum Geschlechterdiskurs der deutschen Romantik am Beispiel der *Lucinde* und ihrer Rezeption », in Hartwig Schultz (Hg.), *Salons der Romantik: Beiträge eines Wiepersdorfer Kolloquiums zu Theorie und Geschichte des Salons*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1997, p. 21-44 ; et Martha B. Helfer, « Gender Studies and Romanticism », in Dennis Mahoney (ed.), *The Literature of German Romanticism*, Rochester, Camden House, 2004, p. 229-249. En contrepoint, on notera l’étude de James R. Hodkinson, *Women and Writing in the Works of Novalis: Transformation Beyond Measure ?*, qui discute de la construction formelle du concept du féminin dans ces lectures et réhabilite la conception novalissienne de la poésie comme un système de communication authentiquement interpersonnel, où la femme poète est librement et activement créatrice. Voir James R. Hodkinson, *Women and Writing in the Works of Novalis: Transformation Beyond Measure ?*, Rochester, Camden House, 2007, en particulier p. 51.

féminisme allemand du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle réside plutôt dans le fait que leur présence active et leurs contributions ont façonné le mouvement romantique de manière décisive ; jamais les femmes n’avaient eu un tel impact dans un mouvement de portée philosophique. À Berlin et à Iéna, dans les années 1790, quelques femmes appartenant à la bourgeoisie, filles d’éminents commerçants ou d’universitaires, contribuèrent à la planification et à la concrétisation de rencontres ayant compté entre intellectuels. Plusieurs marquèrent durablement la vie intellectuelle et la productivité de l’époque ; deux d’entre elles en particulier eurent une énorme influence sur le développement de leurs homologues masculins auxquels on assimile aujourd’hui le cercle dit « d’Iéna » au sein du premier romantisme allemand.

À Berlin, deux jeunes femmes venant d’éminentes familles juives allaient présider les deux salons culturels les plus influents de la ville. Rahel Levin et Henriette Herz furent toutes les deux des personnalités importantes, surtout du point de vue du romantisme allemand<sup>4</sup>. Berlin avait déjà connu quelques salons notables une génération plus tôt, des lieux où Juifs et Chrétiens pouvaient se mélanger et échanger librement des idées, mais les femmes n’y participaient pas<sup>5</sup>. Cette culture du salon connut toutefois une évolution intéressante lorsque les filles de ces familles d’intellectuels, qui avaient été éduquées, atteignirent l’âge adulte (au moment de la Révolution française) et qu’elles furent à même d’établir leurs propres salons. Henriette, en particulier, inventa quelque chose de neuf : tandis que son mari, Marcus (insigne médecin et étudiant de Kant respecté), dissertait dans un salon séparé, Henriette tenait son propre salon, fréquenté par des invités de genres et de classes sociales plus diversifiés. Moins formelle, sa manière d’orchestrer ces rassemblements était plus animée que celle de son mari ; elle créa, en cela, une atmosphère stimulante et progressiste du point de vue social. Son salon eut une influence sur la conception que August et Friedrich Schlegel, mais aussi Friedrich Schleiermacher, se sont faite de la nature de la socialité et du rôle que la conversation peut et doit jouer dans la pratique de la philosophie. Et en même temps, il faut souligner que si ces salons étaient

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Foley analyse l’impact majeur que l’amitié d’Henriette et de Friedrich Schleiermacher a eu sur le travail de ce dernier, surtout sur sa théorie de ce que peut être la meilleure forme de socialité. Voir Peter Foley, *Friedrich Schleiermacher’s “Essay on a Theory of Sociable Behavior” (1799): A Contextual Interpretation*, Lewiston, Edwin Mellen Press, 2006, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> Même les femmes de ces hôtes restaient à l’écart. Voir Hannah Lotte Lund, “Emanzipation in Halböffentlichkeit? Geschlechterverhältnisse und politische Partizipation im literarischen Salon um 1800. Eine Annäherung”, in *Revolution und Emanzipation: Geschlechterordnungen in Europa um 1800*, hg. v. Katharina Rennhak & Virginia Richter, Köln, Böhlau Verlag, 2004, p. 38.

dénués de toute structure hiérarchique et qu'ils offraient aux femmes « une certaine ouverture et mixité sociales », ils ne constituaient pas pour autant un paradis pour les intellectuelles femmes. Dans l'ensemble, la plupart du temps, même Rahel et Henriette n'avaient que très peu l'occasion de s'exprimer<sup>6</sup>.

Une troisième personnalité parmi toutes celles qu'attirait le « salon berlinois » parmi les cercles des années 1790 eut un rôle encore plus direct dans le développement du romantisme. Dorothea Schlegel, née Brendel Mendelssohn, était la fille de Fromet et du philosophe Moses Mendelssohn, l'une des figures philosophiques phare des Lumières allemandes. Brendel reçut une éducation extrêmement soignée pour une femme de cette époque et de son rang. Elle fut encouragée par son père à participer aux groupes de lecture ou « salons » littéraires organisés dans leur maison. C'est là qu'elle se lia d'amitié avec Rahel Levin et Henriette Herz. Elle prit ainsi part à la culture berlinoise des salons et finit par y faire la rencontre, qui fit basculer son existence, de celui qui deviendrait le compagnon de toute une vie, Friedrich Schlegel. À la suite de cette rencontre, elle divorça de son mari bien plus âgé qu'elle, négociant la garde de leur plus jeune enfant jusqu'à sa majorité, et laissa derrière elle sa famille et sa communauté pour devenir la confidente, la muse et le compagnon littéraire de Friedrich.

### 3. Le « cénacle » d'Iéna

Bien que ses amis, y compris Friedrich, l'aient encouragée à écrire, Dorothea Schlegel n'a jamais publié sous son propre nom. Elle a écrit son roman *Florentin* avec difficulté, dans l'ombre de son célèbre mari et des collègues de ce dernier, et dans le but d'en tirer des revenus dont elle avait désespérément besoin. Dorothea avait commencé à écrire avec enthousiasme, allant jusqu'à faire recopier son manuscrit par un homme, de sorte qu'on ne reconnaisse pas son écriture et qu'ainsi, espérait-elle, elle ait une chance d'être publiée. Mais le refus qu'elle essuya dans un premier temps pour la première partie de son roman, jugée « immorale et dépravée », réduisit à néant le peu de confiance qu'elle avait en elle. Finir l'ouvrage fut une épreuve qu'elle n'entreprit que pour s'assurer les revenus dont son fils, Friedrich et elle avaient furieusement besoin. La première partie du roman parut de manière anonyme en 1800 et fit l'objet de critiques aussi cinglantes et qu'élogieuses<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik: Epoche—Werke—Wirkung*, München, Verlag C. H. Beck, 2000, p. 189 sq.

<sup>7</sup> Dans l'introduction à sa traduction anglaise du roman de Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde*, Peter Firchow fait brièvement état d'une recension favorable, plus tardive, du livre de Dorothea. Voir *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans. and with an introduction by Peter

Becker-Cantarino fait remarquer que la « profonde in-sécurité » de Dorothea se reflète dans la forme fragmentaire du roman, tout comme dans son thème et sa composition :

À travers le personnage de Florentin, Dorothea Schlegel a donné forme à ses propres fantasmes, rêves et représentations, à sa quête de l'amitié, de l'amour et de sa patrie. Elle n'a pourtant pas choisi la forme « féminine » du roman d'épreuve (*Prüfungsroman*<sup>8</sup>), mais le roman de la découverte romantique de soi où les personnages sont amenés à voyager pour se retrouver, parodiant ainsi le *Bildungsroman*<sup>9</sup>, soit le roman d'éducation « masculin ». [...] Simplicité du style, clarté de la construction caractérisent son roman qui comprend un voyage avec toute une série d'étapes mais sans but ni point d'arrivée<sup>10</sup>.

Becker-Cantarino plaide aussi pour qu'on lise le roman d'un point de vue féministe en arguant qu'au bout du compte, l'absence de dénouement, la variation ironique et genrée que le roman imprime au *Bildungsroman* classique et romantique, comme le *Wilhelm Meister* de Goethe ou la *Lucinde* de Friedrich Schlegel, font de l'œuvre une contribution unique et appréciable à la littérature du premier romantisme. Néanmoins Dorothea renonça à écrire, une fois la première partie terminée ; rien ne put la convaincre de terminer son roman, demeuré, de façon typiquement romantique, à l'état de fragment pour la postérité.

Parmi les femmes les plus étroitement associées au cercle d'Iéna, Caroline Michaelis, plus tard Boehmer/Schlegel/Schelling, fut un moteur davantage central encore que ne le fut Dorothea. Caroline est née en 1763 dans une famille d'universitaires. Son père, Johann David Michaelis, était un brillant professeur de langues sémitiques à l'université de Göttingen, et le

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Firchow, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1971. Firchow dresse également une courte liste de critiques littéraires renommés ayant dénié à la *Lucinde* de Friedrich le titre de « roman », faute de structure ; il mentionne aussi la stigmatisation de *Lucinde* comme « monstruosité esthétique » sous la plume de Rudolf Haym, beaucoup plus tard au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans le volumineux ouvrage *Die Romantische Schule*, tandis que le *Florentin* de Dorothea est qualifié par Haym de « roman cent fois meilleur, dans son humble manque d'indépendance, que la *Lucinde* dont l'originalité est présomptueuse » (Rudolf Haym, *Die Romantische Schule : Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Geistes*, Berlin, Gaertner, 1870, p. 665).

<sup>8</sup> Littéralement : « roman de vertu » ou de mise à l'épreuve des vertus, à l'instar de la *Clarissa* de Richard Samuelson.

<sup>9</sup> Un roman de la maturation, genre dont les *Années d'apprentissage de Wilhelm Meister* de Goethe était alors (et est toujours) considéré comme l'apogée. Dorothea admirait le *Meister* de Goethe, sans pouvoir toutefois s'y identifier. Becker-Cantarino voit dans le *Florentin* en partie une parodie de l'œuvre célèbre de Goethe et du genre en général. Voir Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, p. 138 sq.

<sup>10</sup> Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, p. 134-135.



traducteur en allemand du roman de Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*. Caroline reçut une éducation ; dès l'enfance, elle aspira à une forme d'indépendance qui lui permettrait d'exprimer ses pensées par l'écriture. Ces espoirs furent anéantis lorsque sa famille lui imposa un mariage arrangé avec un homme beaucoup plus âgé, mais la mort de ce dernier, quatre ans et trois grossesses après leur mariage, permit à Caroline – et cette étape-là changea sa destinée – de s'installer à Mayence, où elle devint une ardente partisane de la Révolution française et où elle resta après que la ville eut été prise par les Français. À la veille de la reprise de Mayence par les Prussiens, elle quitta la ville mais fut arrêtée et emprisonnée par les soldats prussiens pour ses allégeances révolutionnaires et pour avoir eu une aventure avec un soldat français. En prison et se découvrant enceinte, elle rédigea des lettres appelant à l'aide pour sa libération. Parmi les destinataires de ces lettres se trouvait August Wilhelm Schlegel, lequel, après que le frère de Caroline eut obtenu sa libération, lui offrit un endroit où donner naissance à son enfant dans un certain anonymat. C'est dans ce lieu que Friedrich rendit aussi visite à Caroline à la demande d'Auguste. Les deux frères tombèrent instantanément sous le charme de son esprit, de son intelligence et de son indépendance intellectuelle. Elle devint l'amante d'August, puis, sous la pression de sa famille, son épouse. Elle conserva un lien d'amitié avec Friedrich, plus tard, avec Dorothea. C'est essentiellement grâce à la sociabilité de Caroline et à son empressement à accueillir de grandes réunions et à recevoir des visiteurs fréquents que la maison d'August et de Caroline devint le lieu du fameux « cénacle » devenu synonyme du premier romantisme allemand<sup>11</sup>. Caroline, en fin de compte, tomba amoureuse du célèbre philosophe et membre occasionnel du cercle d'Iéna, Friedrich Schelling. La discorde engendrée par l'histoire d'amour qui s'ensuivit, à quoi s'est ajouté le fait que Caroline s'absenta de son foyer à cause d'une maladie qui l'avait gravement frappée, ont largement contribué à la dissolution du cercle et c'est dans ce contexte que s'inscrit la remarque de Dorothea, selon laquelle le cénacle était devenu une « république de despotes » querelleurs. Il n'en demeure pas moins

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<sup>11</sup> Dans son essai « A good Woman, and No Heroine » (« Une femme de bien, mais pas une héroïne »), Sara Friedrichsmeyer écrit que Caroline dut interrompre ses propres travaux d'écriture après que Friedrich et Dorothea Schlegel, et le fils de Dorothea, sont venus vivre chez elle : « Il est clair que ce nouveau mode de vie était une source de stimulation intellectuelle à part entière, mais la lacune dans sa correspondance est également due au fait qu'elle ait tout simplement été débordée. En octobre 1799, elle écrit à Luise Gotter ne pas avoir eu “un instant de répit” en trois mois, ayant eu à sustenter souvent quinze à dix-huit personnes pour le repas principal de la journée. » (Sara Friedrichsmeyer, *In the Shadow of Olympus : German Women Writers Around 1800*, ed. Katherine R. Goodman & Edith Waldstein, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 120).

indéniable que la convivialité et la créativité de ce cercle avaient donné sa renommée au premier romantisme, jusqu'à ce point, et qu'elles n'auraient pu exister sans l'apport de Caroline aux conversations, au bien-être et à l'atmosphère de ces rencontres.

Tout aussi importante fut la contribution de Caroline au genre épistolaire, un aspect généralement négligé par les historiens de l'esthétique philosophique de cette période. Ses lettres ont été louées comme des « chefs-d'œuvre » de forme esthétique<sup>12</sup> et comme le « couronnement de l'écriture épistolaire féminine<sup>13</sup> ». Caroline était une épistolière prolifique, et douée, entretenant une correspondance avec les principaux intellectuels de l'époque, non seulement, entre autres, les figures de proue du premier romantisme allemand mais les géants de la littérature, Schiller et Goethe. Et pourtant, Caroline n'écrivit ni romans ni poésie. Des commentateurs par ailleurs sensibles à la cause des femmes interprètent son choix de se limiter à l'écriture de lettres comme une capitulation devant sa cohorte masculine. Plusieurs, parmi ces hommes, jugeaient de mauvais goût la simple idée qu'une femme écrive et repoussaient la perspective qu'une femme puisse faire son entrée dans la sphère publique de la publication littéraire<sup>14</sup>. Il se peut que Caroline abandonna tout rêve de publication pour cette raison, mais suggérer que les femmes écrivaines *capitulèrent* devant les hommes en s'abstenant d'écrire en vue de se faire publier suppose qu'elles aient eu réellement le choix. Autrement dit, c'est perdre de vue l'enracinement psychologique du sexisme dirigé par des intellectuels hommes contre des intellectuelles femmes, et qu'il n'est pas inhabituel que ce sexisme se manifeste par un dégoût viscéral ou une animosité verbale<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Voir Silvia Bovenschen, *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit. Exemplarische Untersuchungen zu kulturgeschichtlichen und literarischen Präsentationsformen des Weiblichen*, Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1979.

<sup>13</sup> Reinhard M. G. Nickisch, « Briefkultur und sozialgeschichtliche Bedeutung des Frauenbriefes im 18. Jahrhundert », in *Deutsche Literatur von Frauen, I: Vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*, hg. v. Gisela Brinkler-Gabler, München, C. H. Beck, 1988, p. 406.

<sup>14</sup> Aussi sensible qu'il soit à la situation des femmes écrivaines de cette époque, Hans Eichner ignore, dans « Das Bild der Frau in der Frühromantik: Theorie und Wirklichkeit », les contributions épistolaires de Caroline et il les rejette, ainsi que celles de Dorothea, comme de « pâles reflets de la gloire » (p. 165) des penseurs hommes du mouvement, dans *Against the Grain/Gegen den Strich: Selected Essays/Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, eds. Hans Eichner & Rodney Symington, Bern, Peter Lang, 2003, p. 151-169. Voir également l'appréciation que porte Elke Frederiksen au sujet de Caroline, affirmant que celle-ci avait capitulé devant les écrivains masculins de son entourage, dans « Die Frau als Autorin zur Zeit der Romantik: Anfänge einer weiblichen literarischen Tradition », in *Gestaltet und gestaltend: Frauen in der deutschen Literatur* (Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik), hg. v. Marianne Burkhard, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1980, p. 97.

<sup>15</sup> Voir Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, chapitre I.A : « Der lange Weg zur Mündigkeit: Frauen und Literatur im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert », pour une

De plus, les motifs que les commentateurs invoquent aujourd'hui pour expliquer que Caroline n'ait écrit « que » des lettres présupposent à tort que l'écriture de lettres n'est pas un art et peut être négligée en raison de son caractère insignifiant. Une assumption que les premiers romantiques allemands dans leur ensemble ne partageaient pas. Novalis, dans *Pollen*, affirme : « La vraie lettre est poétique conformément à sa nature » ; Friedrich Schlegel et lui avaient l'intention de publier leur correspondance<sup>16</sup>. On peut même soutenir que c'est précisément le talent avec lequel Caroline pratiquait le genre de la conversation qui a fortement influencé les théories de Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis et Schleiermacher sur la socialité romantique et nourri leur espoir de faire de l'acte de philosopher un art. *In fine* force est d'admettre qu'en dépit des maigres chances de voir les femmes accomplir *quoi que ce soit* dans un monde intellectuel défini par les hommes et pour les hommes (d'une certaine classe et d'un certain héritage), la philosophie du premier romantisme allemand a été marquée d'une indéniable « touche féminine<sup>17</sup> ». Le fait que les hommes crédités de l'invention du romantisme par l'histoire se soient approprié les contributions d'Henriette Herz, de Dorothea Veit/

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chronique révélatrice des obstacles rencontrés par les intellectuelles de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> et du début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle dans les pays germanophones, dont la déclaration glaçante du philosophe J. G. Herder (dans une lettre à une amie) selon laquelle le dégoût viscéral qu'il éprouve pour les femmes érudites est « naturel » et qu'il continue, malgré les remontrances de sa correspondante, « d'être très favorable au dicton arabe énonçant qu'« une poule qui chante et une femme savante sont de mauvais présages : on leur coupe à toutes les deux la gorge ». » (p. 31). Les accusations de « capitulation » ne tiennent pas non plus compte de la difficulté qu'il y a à développer un sens de son moi, *a fortiori* à devenir soi, lorsqu'on est marié dès l'adolescence à un homme pratiquement du même âge que son propre père – ce qui était le cas de la plupart des femmes à l'époque, et, au sein du cercle romantique, non seulement de Caroline mais de Henriette Herz (mariée à 15 ans) et Dorothea Mendelssohn/Veit/Schlegel (mariée à 19 ans).

<sup>16</sup> Novalis, *Blüthenstaub*, frag. 56, HKA 2, p. 435 ; *Pollen*, *Semences*, p. 80. Becker-Cantarino souligne à juste titre que leur investissement du genre littéraire de l'écriture épistolaire a toujours renvoyé aux hommes du groupe, mais il est également vrai que Schlegel a encouragé Caroline à exploiter le genre. Pour Becker-Cantarino, cela revenait à marginaliser les femmes ; le genre lui-même était toutefois clairement tenu en estime, quand bien même les contributions des femmes étaient considérées comme des *Briefchen* (diminutif allemand pour lettre) par opposition aux *wahre Briefe* (les « vraies » lettres) des hommes. Voir Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, p. 167-168.

<sup>17</sup> De même, on peut affirmer qu'il y a une indéniable « touche » juive, et même une « touche » bourgeoise, dans le premier romantisme allemand. Voir les analyses de Peter Foley sur le sens « péjoratif » du terme « salon » à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, et sur le salon de Henriette Herz comme tentative d'élargir la fonction du salon au-delà de son rôle de lieu de rencontre et d'interaction entre des familles juives et la communauté non juive de Berlin, pour en faire un espace intellectuel transcendant (idéalement) les genres, l'origine ethnique et la classe sociale. Voir Peter Foley, *Friedrich Schleiermacher's "Essay on a Theory of Sociable Behavior" (1799): A Contextual Interpretation* ; cf. Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, p. 19-26.

Schlegel et de Caroline Boehmer/Schlegel/Schelling, sans reconnaître leur dette ou même sans en avoir conscience, va de pair avec le patriarcat. Mais cela n'enlève rien au fait que c'est aux femmes que l'on doit des aspects centraux du projet romantique en son origine. Et ce fait invite – cela relève même d'une exigence – à étudier de plus près le premier romantisme allemand comme un terreau potentiellement fertile, susceptible de voir fleurir une philosophie féministe.

#### 4. « Socialiser » la philosophie

On ne saurait trop insister sur l'aspect social et collaboratif du premier romantisme allemand. Tous les membres de ce groupe philosophico-poétique comprenaient leur projet comme, de part en part, un partage<sup>18</sup>. C'est précisément pour cette raison qu'on peut affirmer que les femmes appartenant au cercle du premier romantisme allemand (le cercle d'Iéna) en ont foncièrement déterminé le projet. C'est en effet justifié de supposer que les femmes ne pouvaient pas jouer un rôle constitutif du comportement social du premier romantisme allemand sans être en même temps au cœur de la redéfinition de la philosophie opérée par ce dernier comme une entreprise elle-même *sociale* par essence. De concert avec des hommes capables, au moins en partie, de dépasser les stéréotypes de genre, ces femmes ont introduit un type de discours intellectuel qui en est venu à définir la philosophie du premier romantisme : un discours plus ouvert à, ou davantage susceptible d'accueillir, une philosophie féministe.

La pratique que Novalis et Friedrich Schlegel appelaient « symphilosopher », dans laquelle deux personnes ou plus échangent des idées, créant, dans cet échange, une philosophie ou une poésie nouvelle, définit le caractère sociable de leur mouvement. La voie artistique et scientifique du futur – la voie du progrès intellectuel – résidait, aux yeux de Friedrich Schlegel, dans le fait de partager avec autrui ses idées dans le but de les associer « comme deux moitiés » qui ne forment un tout que lorsqu'elles sont réunies :

Une toute nouvelle époque commencerait peut-être dans les sciences et les arts si la symphilosophie et la sympoésie se généralisaient et s'intériorisaient au point qu'il ne soit plus rare de voir une œuvre

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<sup>18</sup> Voir notamment Ernst Behler et Roman Struc, « Introduction » à l'édition anglaise de *l'Entretien sur la poésie* de Friedrich Schlegel : *Friedrich Schlegel: Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968, p. 4 : « C'est peut-être le caractère *collectif* de cette première manifestation du romantisme en Allemagne qui distingue le plus nettement ce mouvement de tous les autres mouvements romantiques européens ».

commune élaborées par plusieurs natures se complétant mutuellement<sup>19</sup>.

Une bonne partie de la doctrine féministe regarde ce mouvement en direction d'une nouvelle époque de collaboration et de réciprocité comme une antidote bienvenue au modèle standard du « génie individuel » en art et dans les sciences. Toutefois, comme le souligne Sara Friedrichsmeyer,

l'idéal de symphilosophie était une arme à double tranchant pour les femmes qui y participaient : l'expérimentation radicale d'une fusion des voix eut pour effet d'invisibiliser davantage encore pour le public leurs contributions individuelles – déjà invisibles, si ce n'est dans la sphère privée –, de sorte qu'elles ont été inévitablement attribuées aux hommes du groupe<sup>20</sup>.

*Lucinde*, le fameux roman de Friedrich Schlegel (tenu pour « infâme » à l'époque), constitue un cas particulier complexe. Écrit à l'époque où il vivait avec Dorothea, après que cette dernière eut divorcé de Simon Veit (le banquier bien plus âgé auquel ses parents l'avaient mariée à ses 18 ans), ce roman fragmentaire est centré sur la relation à la fois intellectuelle et sexuelle du protagoniste Julius (Friedrich) avec celle qu'il considère être la « lumière » de sa vie, Lucinde (Dorothea). Du fait de l'ironie proprement romantique de son style, ironie que Schlegel définissait lui-même comme une « parabase permanente » (interruptions et fragmentation continues), le roman ne se laisse pas aisément résumer. Néanmoins, quoi que Schlegel réussisse ou échoue à faire dans cette œuvre unique, le portrait qu'il dresse de la lutte à laquelle le protagoniste (masculin) se livre pour alimenter et entretenir la réciprocité intellectuelle, créative, de sa relation on ne peut plus charnelle avec Lucinde est éminemment réussi. Dans le roman, le couple idéal décrit par Schlegel est parvenu à se libérer des interdits bourgeois et s'attache à développer et à étendre, en définitive, leur relation d'amants-compagnons de vie-amis. Dans un passage remarquable, dont on trouve des échos dans d'autres écrits de Schlegel, Julius/Friedrich décrit le jeu amoureux qu'il préfère dans son couple :

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<sup>19</sup> *Athenaeum*, Fragment 125, in *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796–1801)*, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* (= KFSÄ), Bd. 2, hg. von Hans Eichner, Zürich, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1967, p. 185 ; *Fragments de l'Athenaeum*, trad. fr. Anne-Marie Lang, in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy (dir.), *L'Absolu littéraire. Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand*, Paris, Seuil, 1978, p. 114-115.

<sup>20</sup> Sara Friedrichsmeyer, dans son essai sur Caroline Schlegel/Schelling, « A Good Woman, and No Heroine », in *In the Shadow of Olympus*.

[...] quand nous inversons les rôles et qu'avec un plaisir enfantin nous rivalisons pour voir qui imitera l'autre de la façon la plus convaincante, et si la vivacité pleine de ménagement de l'homme te réussit mieux, à toi, qu'à moi l'abandon séduisant de la femme. Mais sais-tu que ce doux jeu a pour moi d'autres charmes encore que son charme propre ? [...] J'y vois une merveilleuse allégorie, pleine de sens, du développement du masculin et du féminin en une humanité pleine et entière<sup>21</sup>.

L'idée de la possibilité d'un développement progressif des genres jusqu'au point où une « humanité pleine et entière » est atteinte en chaque individu constitue un moment fort du roman – même en mettant de côté l'effet de brouillage des genres induit par les jeux sexuels du couple.

Du point de vue féministe, il y aurait bien des choses à critiquer dans ce roman. Il est écrit presque exclusivement du point de vue masculin de l'auteur et s'articule autour de la perspective qui est la sienne et de son développement personnel. Le roman adopte fréquemment un langage essentialiste pour caractériser les femmes et il semble dépeindre l'indépendance et la force de caractère de Lucinde moins comme la norme de la féminité que comme une exception. Mais surtout, comme on pouvait s'y attendre, c'est à Dorothea que la divulgation à peine voilée de leur vie sentimentale transgressive valut les foudres et l'opprobre de la culture dominante, dans une bien plus large mesure encore qu'à son célèbre mari.

Le roman contient néanmoins des moments qui le rendent acceptable au point de vue féministe. Le caractère transgressif de la relation entre Lucinde et Julius est porteur de thèmes chers aux féministes : le rejet du mariage « forcé », l'échange des rôles, l'encouragement mutuel à déployer ses talents artistiques, l'égalité entre eux et le respect qu'ils ont l'un pour l'autre de manière générale. Bien que Schlegel affirme que les hommes ne sauraient être amis qu'avec d'autres hommes, la signification du mot « amitié » est infléchie à plusieurs endroits du roman<sup>22</sup>. Julius parle de Lucinde comme de son « amie la plus parfaite » et d'une « femme unique l'ayant touché pour la première fois au plus profond de son cœur » en tant que « sublime amie » (il fait là clairement le portrait de Caroline Schlegel/Schelling)<sup>23</sup>. Par sa relation avec Lucinde il développe au fil du temps la capacité à être plus serein et plus ouvert dans toutes ses amitiés, apprenant ainsi « à percevoir dans l'ordinaire ce qui est noble » et à cesser d'« aimer chez ses amis l'idée d'amitié [au lieu de] les aimer pour eux-mêmes »<sup>24</sup>. Dans le roman, cette nouvelle conception

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<sup>21</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde. Ein Roman*, Berlin, Heinrich Frölich, 1799, p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25 et 181.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

de l'amitié permet à Julius et Lucinde de créer une « société libre » – allusion évidente au cercle d'Iéna.

Même l'égoïsme prend des accents fortement féministes : dans les fragments constituant la suite que Schlegel avait envisagé de donner à son roman, les accusations de nombrilisme littéraire sont mises en pièces dans la bouche d'une femme, celle, précisément, de sa « sublime amie », Juliane/Caroline, dans une lettre adressée à Lucinde/Dorothea :

Je veux parler de moi, car pourquoi devrais-je nier que je rapporte tout à ma personne et à ma douleur ? Aussi volontiers qu'on puisse continuer à errer dans un effort sans relâche, tout un chacun doit bien, au bout du compte, se réfugier en soi-même ! Tels sont les êtres humains, race étrange, l'égoïsme est profondément enraciné en eux. Et si seulement je pouvais parler, oh que ce serait bien ! –

Suis-je de celles qui trouvent leur destin singulier ? Oh non, je ne saurais être aussi facilement en paix avec moi-même<sup>25</sup>.

Elle décrit ensuite ses souffrances, qu'elle minimise comme étant le lot de bien des femmes. Elle réalise que les épreuves qu'elle a traversées, la mort de ses enfants, un mariage sans amour, n'étaient « certainement rien d'inhabituel » ! Elle raconte avoir « souhaité mourir » et qu'« une aspiration tout aussi profonde [l']en avait empêchée. [Qu'elle] voulai[t] être au clair avec [elle]-même ». Le mot de la fin de ce roman inachevé revient à Juliane/Caroline, et c'est la déclaration lucide et très émouvante d'une femme dont les grandes aptitudes pour communiquer ne furent jamais pleinement réalisées ni pleinement appréciées, mais qui ne cessa jamais pour autant de s'efforcer de se trouver elle-même ou plutôt de devenir elle-même.

L'empathie avec laquelle Schlegel dépeint la détresse de Caroline met en lumière un autre aspect de la socialité romantique : même si l'expérimentation symphilosophique et sympoétique ne permettait aucune auto-glorification, elle n'en exigeait pas moins, inversement, de ses participants qu'ils évitent l'écueil tout aussi destructeur de l'effacement de soi et de la servilité. La symphilosophie ne pouvait fonctionner qu'à la condition que chaque individu y contribue à part égale, avec le même enthousiasme. La socialité du premier romantisme allemand appelait la reconnaissance respectueuse de la singularité de l'apport de chacune des parties prenantes. Le roman *Lucinde* s'approche de la représentation d'un tel

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<sup>25</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde. Bruchstücke aus dem Nachlass*, KFSV V, hg. v. Hans Eichner, 1962, p. 91-92.

idéal, auquel le cercle d'Iéna lui-même était encore bien loin d'atteindre sur la question du genre.

Bien sûr, les échanges et les amitiés nouées par les hommes du groupe, en particulier l'amitié de Friedrich Schlegel et du jeune et passionné Friedrich von Hardenberg, qui prit pour nom de plume Novalis, ont également influencé la socialité romantique. Novalis a souvent été caricaturé comme introverti, jusqu'au solipsisme ; il affirme en réalité des vues à l'opposé d'une telle caricature. Il estimait que la philosophie résidait dans l'acte même de philosopher, c'est-à-dire dans l'exercice d'une activité sociale orientée vers le progrès (ou du moins devant l'être) et tributaire d'un échange et d'un parachèvement mutuels des idées. Friedrich Schlegel, de manière symphilosophique, insère dans un texte de Novalis ce fragment :

Lorsqu'on alterne, en communiquant des pensées, entre compréhension absolue et non-compréhension absolue, ne peut-on pas déjà qualifier cela d'amitié philosophique<sup>26</sup> ?

La réflexion sur les choses avec autrui, l'élaboration progressive des idées et le fait de les parfaire au contact avec d'autres : telle est la définition même de la philosophie. Dans le fragment précité, Schlegel suggère que ce que nous appelons la contemplation intérieure n'est pas autre chose, par extension, qu'un cas particulier de cette activité sociale, son intériorisation. « Et la vie d'un homme qui pense est-elle autre chose qu'une symphilosophie toujours intérieure ?<sup>27</sup> »

Pour Novalis comme pour Friedrich Schlegel, philosopher « en solo » présuppose la possibilité de philosopher en compagnie d'autrui. Le philosophe qui ne fait que spéculer sur le monde se laisse porter par une abstraction et une réflexion toujours accrues, dans un processus sans fin qui ne parvient jamais à un « absolu »<sup>28</sup>. Bien que le procès d'une quête perpétuelle d'un absolu qui nous échappe dès qu'on essaie de le saisir – qui nous dépasse entièrement – fasse *partie* de l'exercice de la philosophie, cela ne saurait cerner toute la vérité de ce que *nous* sommes capables de devenir en tant qu'êtres humains. Novalis exprime cette problématique et la réponse avancée par le premier romantisme allemand dans un fragment désormais célèbre qui s'ouvre sur l'observation selon laquelle nous fantasmons souvent un au-delà aux cieux ou dans les profondeurs, et rêvons de voyages à travers

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<sup>26</sup> Novalis, *Blüthenstaub*, frag. 20, HKA 2, p. 419; *Pollen, Semences*, p. 73 (trad. mod.).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Novalis, *Fichte-Studien*, frag. 566, HKA 2, p. 269-270.



eux. Mais dans ce cas, ajoute-t-il, le véritable « absolu » doit se trouver en nous :

[...] l'univers n'est-il pas déjà *en nous* ? Nous ignorons les profondeurs de notre esprit. – Le chemin mystérieux va vers l'intérieur. C'est en nous, ou nulle part, que se trouve l'éternité avec ses mondes [...] <sup>29</sup>.

Contrairement aux stéréotypes touchant au romantisme, et à Novalis en particulier, ce passage fameux n'est *pas* une invitation à se découvrir soi-même dans une sorte de solipsisme mystique. Il est vrai que le chemin « intérieur » renvoie, chez Novalis, à la découverte de son moi le plus intime ou, pour reprendre la formule de Nietzsche, au « deviens ce que tu es ». Mais il convient de remarquer que le concept de « siège de l'âme » était un terme technique du lexique philosophique de l'époque, lié au problème métaphysique de l'interaction entre le corps et l'esprit <sup>30</sup>. Les premiers romantiques étaient très kantien sur ce point : la découverte de soi ne saurait être une affaire de métaphysique. Nul moi absolu ne saurait être saisi. Le « vrai » soi recherché en philosophie ne peut être trouvé que dans cet espace de l'interaction humaine avec le monde et d'autres êtres humains. Autrement dit, nous sommes des êtres sociaux ayant des possibilités de vivre des choses qui peuvent fondamentalement être partagées et qui sont, par conséquent, communicables universellement. Ainsi que l'écrit Novalis :

Le siège de l'âme se trouve au point de contact entre le monde intérieur et extérieur. Là où ils se traversent, il est à chaque point de passage <sup>31</sup>.

Il remarque ailleurs qu'après Kant, les mathématiques pures et les sciences naturelles pures se rapportent aux formes de la sensibilité externe et se demande : « Quelle science se rapporte alors aux formes de la sensibilité interne ? » :

Y a-t-il encore une connaissance *extrasensorielle* ? Une autre voie est-elle ouverte, permettant de sortir de soi et d'atteindre d'autres êtres, ou d'être affectés par eux <sup>32</sup> ?

<sup>29</sup> Novalis, *Blüthenstaub*, frag. 16, HKA 2, p. 417 et 419 ; *Pollen, Semences*, p. 72 (trad. mod.).

<sup>30</sup> Pour plus de détails sur le débat autour du « siège de l'âme » et l'influence de ce débat sur la réception novalissienne de Kant, voir ma discussion de la réponse faite par Kant à Sömmering sur l'incohérence du concept même de « siège de l'âme », dans Jane Kneller, *Kant and the Power of Imagination*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 143 sq.

<sup>31</sup> Novalis, *Blüthenstaub*, frag. 16, HKA 2, p. 419 ; *Pollen, Semences*, p. 73.

<sup>32</sup> Novalis, *Kant-Studien*, frag. 46, HKA 2, p. 390 ; « Études sur Kant et Eschenmayer », *Semences*, p. 63.

Pour Novalis, comme pour d'autres romantiques, sortir de soi au sens d'être chez soi dans le monde est un thème récurrent. Novalis ne répond pas ici à sa propre question, mais ailleurs il partage clairement l'opinion du groupe des premiers romantiques allemands : c'est en sortant de soi que l'on devient soi-même, et cela requiert de trouver un moyen de se connecter aux autres, socialement, intellectuellement, intuitivement et physiquement. Ce processus de découverte de soi est en même temps un processus de création de soi ; c'est pourquoi l'ancienne façon de faire de la philosophie ne suffit pas : « Le monde doit être romantisé », dit la célèbre maxime de Novalis. Devenu un véritable manifeste du programme des premiers romantiques allemands, le fragment dont est tirée cette maxime plaide pour une nouvelle approche de la philosophie par l'art et la créativité, une approche qu'il considérait comme intrinsèquement sociale : la « philosophie romantique » revient à opérer une « potentiation » qui élève le soi de concert – symphilosophiquement – avec les autres. Nous sommes ainsi transformés de manière exponentielle, selon les propres termes de Novalis, en étant élevés à une puissance supérieure, à un « soi meilleur »<sup>33</sup>.

Novalis fournit les soubassements métaphysiques de la valorisation active de la socialité par le premier romantisme ; il a participé lui aussi à la formidable expérimentation du cercle d'Iéna, même si ses rapports avec les femmes étaient empreints d'anxiété et parsemés de tragédies. Son père mit fin à une première histoire sentimentale ; peu de temps après, Novalis s'éprit de Sophie von Kühn, âgée de 13 ans, avec laquelle il se fiança en secret. Bien que son père eut cette fois approuvé leur relation, le bonheur de Novalis fut brisé lorsqu'elle mourut un an plus tard. Profondément secoué par les souffrances qu'elle eut à endurer et ému par son courage, il ne se remit que progressivement de sa mort pour finalement se fiancer à nouveau avec une femme pour laquelle il avait une très vive admiration et un très grand respect. Sa mort prématurée (il n'avait pas tout à fait 29 ans) interdit à la postérité de savoir si ou plutôt comment sa vision des femmes aurait évolué du fait de cette relation.

## **5. Les femmes et l'idéal de la « libre socialité » selon Schleiermacher**

Le dernier mot au sujet de la socialité des premiers romantiques allemands, envisagée au point de vue féministe, appartient à Friedrich Schleiermacher dans *l'Essai d'une théorie du comportement sociable* (1799), qui aborde de manière approfondie l'idéal de la socialité. *L'Essai* de Schleiermacher brosse le tableau d'une société d'égaux : un groupe d'individus de professions, de

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<sup>33</sup> Novalis, *Poëticismen*, frag. 105, HKA 2, p. 545 ; *Poëticismes*, *Semences*, p. 142.

pratiques religieuses ou de sexes divers se rassemblant dans le but d'élever à un niveau supérieur la tendance naturelle des êtres humains à la sociabilité. La raison d'une telle agrégation sociale n'est pas une simple affaire de divertissement, elle est même autre que seulement esthétique : c'est que les êtres humains ont foncièrement besoin de diversité sociale afin de transcender leur situation de vie contingente et de devenir plus essentiellement eux-mêmes.

La libre socialité, qui n'est ni liée ni déterminée par aucun but extérieur, est fortement réclamée par tous les hommes éduqués comme un de leurs premiers et plus nobles besoins. Qui ne fait qu'être ballotté entre les soucis de la vie domestique et les affaires de la vie civile s'approche du but suprême de l'existence humaine d'autant plus lentement qu'il emprunte fidèlement cette voie de façon répétée<sup>34</sup>.

Les êtres humains s'efforcent naturellement de s'améliorer – de devenir qui ils sont essentiellement – mais la stricte division du travail entre vie publique et vie privée fixe, des deux côtés, des bornes au développement individuel, développement qui a, partant, quelque chose d'unilatéral. La vie professionnelle « cantonne l'activité de l'esprit à une sphère limitée », et la vie domestique est pire encore : elle « nous met en contact avec un nombre très réduit de personnes, toujours les mêmes ». La seule solution est de réunir un groupe de personnes aspirant toutes à des horizons plus larges mais provenant d'horizons très différents, dans une configuration :

[...] situant la sphère d'un individu à l'intersection de la sphère d'autres individus de la manière la plus variée possible, si bien que le point où la sphère de chacun touche à sa propre limite lui ouvre en même temps une perspective sur un monde différent et étranger, de sorte que tous les manifestations de l'humanité lui soient peu à peu familières et que même les âmes et les situations les plus éloignées de lui puissent lui devenir amicales et, en quelque sorte, voisines<sup>35</sup>.

Pour Schleiermacher, il est essentiel que cet espace discursif se constitue de manière consensuelle, sans aucune autorité civile, conformément au principe fondamental selon lequel « chacun doit être son propre législateur et doit veiller à ce que le bien commun ne subisse aucun tort<sup>36</sup> ». L'idéal schleier-

<sup>34</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. I.2, p. 165. Les références à l'*Essai* de Schleiermacher sont données ici et ci-après dans l'édition critique de ses œuvres complètes (*Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ci-après KGA), vol. I.2, hg. v. Günter Meckenstock, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1984.

<sup>35</sup> Schleiermacher, KGA, p. 165.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

machérien de socialité est donc fondamentalement une notion éthique<sup>37</sup> plutôt que politique, mais il préfigure aussi quelque chose comme une position originale à instituer empiriquement dans un esprit rawlsien : certes, la profession, la classe et le sexe des personnes sont connus, mais la connaissance d'une des sphères ne doit pas pouvoir dominer et ne suffit pas pour développer une conversation sociable, puisqu'elle laisse de côté des individus n'appartenant pas à cette sphère. Le principe substantiel de réciprocité avancé par Schleiermacher donne chair à la description de cette procédure : « Chacun doit être incité au libre jeu de la pensée en communiquant ce qui lui est propre<sup>38</sup>. »

L'analyse détaillée qu'il donne de ce projet d'une grande complexité souligne l'importance qu'il y a pour ses membres à ne pas limiter leurs contributions à des généralités qu'ils pourraient partager, ce qui deviendrait vite fastidieux et entraînerait une « cristallisation » de la société en sous-groupes ayant les mêmes intérêts particuliers. « Cette cristallisation, met en garde Schleiermacher, se fait à coup sûr au grand détriment de la socialité, lui interdisant certainement d'atteindre son objectif qui est de permettre à une personne de se soustraire pour un temps au point de vue de sa profession. » Il poursuit en ces termes :

Je ne peux m'abstenir ici d'un commentaire : n'est-il pas vrai que la meilleure socialité se forme parmi nous d'abord sous les yeux et la gouverne des femmes, et que c'est, comme pour tant d'autres choses excellentes, l'œuvre de la nécessité dans les affaires humaines ? Les femmes sont, si elles suivent la maxime critiquée ici [c'est-à-dire : limiter mes conversations avec les autres à ce que je sais avoir en commun avec eux], bien plus mal loties que les hommes [...]. Lorsqu'un homme parle de sa profession, il se sent par ailleurs libre à un égard : à l'égard de la part domestique. Les femmes, au contraire, parce que ces deux parts de l'existence coïncident chez elles, ressentent toutes les entraves qui pèsent sur elles dans une telle conversation. [...] du fait qu'elles n'ont pas autre chose en commun avec eux que leur condition d'être cultivés, les femmes deviennent les fondatrices de la société meilleure<sup>39</sup>.

Il dresse ensuite un tableau complexe et nuancé des défis que comportent l'institution et le maintien d'une telle société que les femmes sont (à ce

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<sup>37</sup> Sur « le mouvement général de cette éthique qui passe de la domination de la nature à sa connaissance et de l'individuel à l'universel », voir le schéma établi par Christian Berner dans « Schleiermacher et la question de l'université dans le contexte de l'idéalisme allemand », en ligne sur le blog du Groupe d'études animé par Pierre Macherey, « La philosophie au sens large », <https://philolarge.hypotheses.org/619>, consulté le 16 décembre 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Schleiermacher, KGA, p. 170.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

moment précis de l'histoire) les plus qualifiées, selon lui, à présider. Il conclut que ce type de pratique conversationnelle devra trouver son équilibre propre, dans une « oscillation » entre, d'une part, le fait de partager des détails sur son parcours personnel et d'autre part de veiller à ce que « le but ultime de la libre socialité » ne s'en trouve pas pour autant compromis : « C'est ainsi que la réciprocité se réfléchit elle-même et s'accomplit, et qu'elle détermine la nature tout entière de la société<sup>40</sup>. » Cet équilibre discursif est un art ; c'est même un art de la sensibilité aux autres :

[l'art] de converser de telle sorte que s'il y a réceptivité, la conversation ne manquera pas d'avoir un effet ; et que si cette réceptivité fait défaut, personne ne s'en trouvera pour autant mis dans l'embarras ; [cela requiert] d'être attentif aux moindres signes révélant ce qui outrepassé les aptitudes de l'un ou l'autre. Tel est l'art réellement constitutif du *raffinement* dans la conversation.

L'*Essai* capte l'essence du discours philosophique conforme à l'idéal du premier romantisme : un discours véritablement inclusif, respectueux des différences et de l'importance de l'individualité. Dans la société idéale de Schleiermacher, toutes les parties prenantes sont regardées comme des fins en soi, des agents libres choisissant d'élargir leur propre horizon mais aussi l'horizon des autres par la libre socialité. Le modèle schleiermachérien de la libre socialité peut être considéré comme la représentation romantique de possibilités inscrites dans la vie réelle. Un correctif à l'égard de ce qui est perçu par Schleiermacher et d'autres premiers romantiques allemands comme un rationalisme excessif dans la conception que Kant se fait des rapports éthiques entre les êtres humains. Becker-Cantarino insiste à juste titre sur l'intention de l'*Essai* de Schleiermacher : dépeindre un idéal éthique, non un instantané des salons berlinois eux-mêmes<sup>41</sup>. Mais à la fois, il ne fait aucun doute que son amitié avec Henriette Herz et son implication dans le salon que celle-ci tenait à Berlin ont eu une profonde influence sur sa théorie selon laquelle les femmes étaient les mieux placées pour instituer et présider

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170 et 178.

<sup>41</sup> Becker-Cantarino souligne également l'orientation essentiellement *éthique* de l'essai (*Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, p. 188-190) et Peter Foley soutient que Schleiermacher a été nettement influencé par l'éthique de Kant, brossant un tableau concret d'un « royaume des fins » kantien, soit d'un espace idéal dans lequel chaque individu reconnaît tous les autres individus comme des êtres rationnels et, par conséquent, des fins en soi, et interagit avec eux conformément à ce principe. Peter Foley examine l'influence du « royaume des fins » de Kant sur l'*Essai* de Schleiermacher en tant que « point de départ des considérations éthiques et sociales de Schleiermacher ». Voir Peter Foley, *Friedrich Schleiermacher's "Essay on a Theory of Sociable Behavior" (1799): A Contextual Interpretation*, p. 112 sq.

la communauté sociable idéale<sup>42</sup>. Son amitié de longue date avec Dorothea Veit/Schlegel et Caroline Schlegel/Schelling a également joué un rôle crucial dans sa conception de la centralité des femmes dans cette forme idéale de socialité. Schleiermacher n'entendait pas reproduire la « république de despotes », stigmatisant, dans la lettre que Dorothea lui avait adressée, le cénacle d'Iéna à sa fin ; et, comme on l'a vu, l'atmosphère discursive des salons était progressiste pour l'époque en ce qu'elle permettait aux femmes d'y participer, tout en étant loin d'être idéale quant au nombre de femmes impliquées ou en termes de participation active aux échanges intellectuels de la part des quelques femmes présentes. Néanmoins, l'amitié sincère que Schleiermacher a nouée avec ces femmes, Henriette Herz en particulier, et l'impact de leurs conversations, à la fois en personne et dans des lettres, eurent un profond effet sur lui.

Le fragment 364 de l'*Athenaeum*, où Friedrich Schlegel a inséré « Idée d'un catéchisme de la raison à l'usage des femmes nobles », un texte de Schleiermacher, en est une autre preuve. Il s'agit, par le format et le langage, d'un clin d'œil aux dix commandements et au Credo apostolique du catéchisme luthérien. Mais le contenu n'en est pas moins du premier romantisme à l'état pur dans ses « enseignements » à l'adresse des femmes. Il comprend des commandements tels que « Tu ne porteras pas de faux témoignage en faveur des hommes [*Mann*], tu n'embelliras pas leur barbarie de paroles ou d'actes » et « Convoite la culture, l'art, la sagesse et l'honneur des hommes » ; ainsi que des articles de foi tels que :

Je crois que je ne vis pas pour obéir ou pour me dissiper, mais pour être et devenir ; et je crois au pouvoir qu'ont la volonté et la culture de me rapprocher à nouveau de l'infini, de me libérer des liens de l'inculture et de me rendre indépendante des limites du sexe<sup>43</sup>.

Conformément aux commentaires de Schlegel sur l'amitié dans *Lucinde*, Schleiermacher inclut aussi « l'amitié des hommes » dans une liste d'autres valeurs que les femmes devraient adopter.

Le plus intéressant, du point de vue de la philosophie et dans une perspective féministe, est sans doute le premier *credo* : « Je crois en l'humanité

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<sup>42</sup> « On ne saurait trop insister sur le rôle joué par Herz dans [la construction de l'essai de Schleiermacher]. En tant que figure de proue du salon le plus important que l'on sait avoir été fréquenté par Schleiermacher, elle occupe une position qui la rapproche tellement de la rédaction de l'*Essai* que sa compagnie intellectuelle peut être vue comme un apport à celui-ci » (Peter Foley, *Friedrich Schleiermacher's "Essay on a Theory of Sociable Behavior"* (1799), p. 17).

<sup>43</sup> *Fragments de l'Athenaeum*, frag. 364, in *L'Absolu littéraire*, p. 157-158.

infinie, qui fut avant d'être voilée sous la virilité et la féminité<sup>44</sup>. » La conception de Schleiermacher selon laquelle les femmes et les hommes forment ensemble un tout, ou qu'ils peuvent former à nouveau dans la chair l'unité de l'humain originaire, a été considérée par certains comme un aspect féministe de son œuvre, alors même qu'elle a servi à étayer son opinion résolument inégalitaire selon laquelle les femmes appartiennent à la sphère privée, les hommes à la sphère publique<sup>45</sup>.

## 6. Conclusion : le féminisme au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle et le premier romantisme allemand

En dépit des obstacles énormes sur lesquels les femmes ont buté à l'époque du premier romantisme allemand quand il s'est agi de prendre part de manière égale à la vie intellectuelle et publique, elles n'en ont pas moins eu une influence indéniable sur le développement du projet symphilosophique de la *Frühromantik*. Elles ont joué un rôle majeur dans la construction d'un individualisme perspectiviste et d'une socialité ouverte qui sont les caractéristiques par excellence de la pratique philosophique du premier romantisme allemand. Elles méritent, pour cette seule raison, une place dans l'histoire de la théorie féministe. De plus, du fait de ce perspectivisme et du caractère central des rapports multiples, divers, singuliers que les êtres humains entretiennent les uns avec les autres et dans lesquels ces perspectives ont leur source, l'invisibilité des femmes en philosophie a été promue au rang de problème *théorique* fondamental à résoudre pour le projet symphilosophique constitutif du premier romantisme. Il importe de souligner que les contributions de ces femmes ont nécessité de *théoriser* le rôle de sujets marginalisés au cœur même de son processus : elles ont posé un problème auquel le premier romantisme a été explicitement contraint de se confronter, même si tous ses représentants masculins ne furent pas à même de le faire de façon consistante. À cet égard, le premier romantisme allemand a quelque chose de remarquable et qui peut être considéré comme une des toutes premières formes du féminisme d'aujourd'hui.

Certes, mettre en œuvre la libre créativité ainsi que le respect et soutien mutuels qu'appelle cette philosophie dans les interactions humaines n'a pas été sans problèmes. Le succès avec lequel le premier romantisme allemand a tenté de « socialiser » le discours philosophique a été, sur le moment, fragile, de courte durée ; il n'a pas conduit à terme au mouvement grâce auquel s'est

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>45</sup> Voir Thandeka, « Schleiermacher, Feminism and Liberation Theologies : A Key », in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 287-306.

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opérée la pleine et entière participation des femmes que ses tenants envisageaient. Mais ce que je veux dire, c'est tout simplement que c'était l'incroyable tentative de construire pour la première fois une pratique inclusive et que les philosophes féministes du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle sont désormais dans une bien meilleure position pour réinventer cette théorie et en tirer le meilleur parti possible pour notre époque.



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## Narrative and Fragment

### The Social Self in Karoline von Günderrode

*Anna C. Ezekiel\**

#### ABSTRACT

This paper argues that Karoline von Günderrode's unique account of the socially constructed self provides a model for satisfying relationships and a stable self on the basis of a fragmented and untransparent subjectivity. Günderrode views experience as a discontinuous series of moments out of which a self can be constructed in two ways, both involving interactions with others. One of these is narrative; the other is a form of immediate experience, including experiencing together with others, that precedes narrative accounts of identity. For Günderrode, the most important ways of interacting with others involve sharing thoughts, feelings and experiences without attempting to integrate these into a more holistic image of, or story about, the person with whom one is interacting. The result is a model for relationships between transitory, opaque selves that creates a basis for social interaction and the construction of identity that can survive and flourish without a stable self that is completely known to itself and others.

*Keywords:* Karoline von Günderrode, fragment, narrative, self, friendship, historical women philosophers

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In diesem Beitrag wird argumentiert, dass Karoline von Günderrodes einzigartige Darstellung des sozial konstruierten Selbst ein Modell für befriedigende Beziehungen und ein stabiles Selbst auf der Grundlage einer fragmentierten und undurchsichtigen Subjektivität bietet. Günderrode betrachtet Erfahrung als eine diskontinuierliche Abfolge von Momenten, aus denen das Selbst auf zwei Weisen konstruiert werden kann, wobei die beiden Interaktionen mit anderen beinhalten. Eine davon ist narrativ; die andere stellt eine Form der unmittelbaren Erfahrung dar, die das gemeinsame Erleben mit anderen einschließt und der narrativen Darstellung von Identität vorausgeht. Für Günderrode bestehen die wichtigsten Möglichkeiten der Interaktion mit anderen darin, Gedanken, Gefühle und Erfahrungen auszutauschen, ohne zu versuchen, diese in ein ganzheitlicheres Bild oder eine Geschichte über die Person, mit der man interagiert, zu integrieren. Das Ergebnis ist ein Modell für Beziehungen zwischen vergänglichen, undurchsichtigen Subjekten, das eine Grundlage für soziale Interaktion und die Konstruktion von Identität schafft, die ohne ein stabiles Selbst, das sich selbst und anderen vollständig bekannt ist, überleben und gedeihen kann.

*Stichwörter:* Karoline von Günderrode, Fragment, Erzählung, Selbst, Freundschaft, historische Philosophinnen

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\* PhD in Philosophy (McGill University, Montreal, Canada), independent researcher – [anna.c.ezekiel@gmail.com](mailto:anna.c.ezekiel@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

The reputation of Karoline von Günderrode (1780–1806) as, supposedly, a paradigmatically tragic Romantic has ensured her a small but consistent following.<sup>1</sup> Her suicide at the age of 26 immediately fostered public fascination with her life and death and, partly in consequence, her writings have often been interpreted in relation to the “Günderrode mythos” of an ill-fated, death-obsessed and mystical poet. However, there are other sides to Günderrode’s work. A dedicated autodidact, Günderrode studied Fichte, Schelling, Kant, Herder, Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel, among others, as well as ideas from ancient Greece, Persia, Egypt and India. Her reflections on philosophy, religion and mythology are evident not only in her literary works, which include poems, dramas, short stories, and dialogues,<sup>2</sup> but also in more analytic form in unpublished fragments and essays, letters, and notes on her philosophical studies.<sup>3</sup>

A number of scholars have considered Günderrode’s contributions to Early German Romanticism, as well as the relationship of her work to that of Schelling and Fichte,<sup>4</sup> although there is still much to do in these areas. Also relevant to this article is Günderrode’s status as a bridge between Early German Romanticism and Heidelberg Romanticism. Günderrode was a friend of the Brentano family, including Clemens and Bettina, both of whom

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<sup>1</sup> Research for this paper was partly funded by an “Émilie du Châtelet Award” from the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies.

<sup>2</sup> Günderrode published two collections, *Gedichte und Phantasien* (1804) and *Poetische Fragmente* (1805) in her lifetime and had sent a third, *Melete*, to the publishers when she died; she also published separately three plays and a short story.

<sup>3</sup> The critical edition of Günderrode’s works includes notes on philosophy, chemistry, Latin, ancient history and eastern religions, among other topics: *Sämtliche Werke und ausgewählte Studien. Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe*, 3 vols., ed. Walther Morgenthaler (Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1990–1991) (hereafter “SW”). The most complete edition of Günderrode’s letters is Birgit Weissenborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir ein zärtliches Pfand. Die Briefe der Karoline von Günderrode* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> On Günderrode, Schelling and Fichte, see Ruth Christmann, *Zwischen Identitätsgewinn und Bewußtseinsverlust. Das philosophisch-literarische Werk der Karoline von Günderrode (1780–1806)* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2005), 95f; Helga Dormann, *Die Kunst des inneren Sinns. Mythisierung der inneren und äusseren Natur im Werk Karoline von Günderrodes* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2004); Dalia Nassar, “The Human Vocation and the Question of the Earth: Karoline von Günderrode’s Reading of Fichte,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* (forthcoming). On Günderrode and Early German Romanticism, see Gesa Dane, “Women Writers and Romanticism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to German Romanticism*, ed. Nicholas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Anna Ezekiel, “Women, Women Writers, and Early German Romanticism,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of German Romantic Philosophy*, ed. Elizabeth Millán (London: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2021); Sabine Götz, “Günderrode Mines Novalis,” in *“The Spirit of Poesy”: Essays on Jewish and German Literature and Thought in Honor of Géza von Molnár*, ed. Richard Block and Peter Fenves (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 89–130.

were later part of the Heidelberger Kreis.<sup>5</sup> She was a strong influence on Bettina, who published an edited version of their correspondence, *Die G nderrode*, in 1840.<sup>6</sup> And, as is discussed below, there are similarities between Clemens' and G nderrode's understandings of the self; G nderrode's letters show that she discussed her ideas on selfhood with Clemens, and may therefore have exerted a direct influence on him. G nderrode also corresponded on philosophy and ancient history, languages and religions with the influential Heidelberg philologist Georg Friedrich Creuzer, with whom she had an affair, and who published two of G nderrode's pieces in his journal, *Studien*.

While G nderrode's impact on nineteenth century European and American thought has yet to be investigated in depth, over the last 20 years her work has begun to receive serious attention for its philosophical concerns. In particular, there is a growing body of scholarship on G nderrode's contributions to ideas about gender, agency and the construction of identity.<sup>7</sup> G nderrode's consideration of the role of social relations in enabling agency and creating identity, her agnosticism regarding social, political and moral progress, and her insistence on a monistic view of the universe underlie a model of the self and its relation to society and the natural world that seems decidedly modern. This paper explores one aspect of G nderrode's unique understanding of the human condition: her articulation of possibilities for creating satisfying relationships and ways of understanding one's own selfhood in the context of a fragmented and untransparent subjectivity. I argue that G nderrode views this discontinuous self as constructed in two ways, both of which involve interactions with others. One of these is narrative; the other is a form of immediate experience, including experiencing things together with others, that precedes narrative accounts of identity and is, for G nderrode, the real site of potentially fulfilling relationships.

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<sup>5</sup> In 1811 Bettina Brentano married another Heidelberger Romantic, Achim von Arnim, whose 1812 novel *Mellick Maria Blainville, die Hausprophetin aus Arabien* is supposedly based on G nderrode.

<sup>6</sup> This text was itself an influence on American Transcendentalism, translated into English by Margaret Fuller, who also based her account of friendship on Brentano-von Arnim's portrayal of her relationship with G nderrode (Fuller, "Bettine Brentano und G nderrode," *The Dial* 2 [1842]: 313–57).

<sup>7</sup> Liesl Allingham, "Counteremory in Karoline von G nderrode's 'Darthula nach Ossian': A Female Warrior, Her Unruly Breast, and the Construction of Her Myth," *Goethe Yearbook* 21 (July 2014): 39–56; Ezekiel, "Metamorphosis, Personhood, and Power in Karoline von G nderrode," *European Romantic Review* 25.6 (2014): 773–91; Patricia Anne Simpson, "The Essential Duel: Karoline von G nderrode on the Margins of War," in *The Erotics of War in German Romanticism* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2006), 104–127.

Sections 2 and 3 of this article clarify the conception of selfhood that emerges in Günderrode's letters and published works and respond to interpretations that present Günderrode's conception of the self as reflecting primarily her own, supposedly pathological sense of self. Section 4 relates Günderrode's model to Early German Romantic ideas about narrative self-construction and its limitations, and explains the role of others in this process, according to Günderrode. Section 5 argues that, for Günderrode, narrative is not the only or even primary means by which individuals construct identities together; rather, she regards the most important ways of interacting with others as involving the sharing of thoughts, feelings and experiences without necessarily attempting to integrate these into a more holistic image of, or story about, the person with whom one is interacting. The result, as I argue in the last section, is a model for relationships between transitory, opaque selves which creates a basis for social interaction and the construction of identity that can survive and flourish without a stable self that is completely known to itself and to others.

## 2. The Fragmented Self

As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>8</sup> scholarly understanding of Günderrode's account of the self has been hindered by a tendency to focus on her biography when interpreting her writings. As a result, where Günderrode makes claims about the self, or about the nature of identity, these have tended to be read as claims about her own, supposedly conflicted, morbid and alienated self,<sup>9</sup> rather than as articulations of a philosophical position. This is especially true for readings of Günderrode's letters, where she makes some of her clearest claims about the nature of the self. By contrast, ideas about identity or selfhood reflected in Günderrode's published works and drafts have either received little

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<sup>8</sup> Anna Ezekiel, "Sincerity, Idealization and Writing with the Body: Karoline von Günderrode and Her Reception," in *Aufrichtigkeitseffekte. Signale, soziale Interaktionen und Medien im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, ed. Simon Bunke and Katerina Mihaylova (Freiburg: Rombach, 2016), 275–90.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "Karoline von Günderrode: Dichtung—Mythologie—Geschlecht," in *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik: Epoche, Werke, Wirkung* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2000), 204; Christa Bürger, "'Aber eine Sehnsucht war in mir, die ihren Gegenstand nicht kannte...'. Ein Versuch über Karoline von Günderrode," *Metis* 2 (1995): 27; Roswitha Burwick, "Liebe und Tod in Leben und Werk der Günderrode," *German Studies Review* 3.2 (1980): 209; Rüdiger Görner, "Das 'heimliche Ächzen des gemäßhandelten Herzens...'. Karoline von Günderrodes Grenzgang," in *Grenzgänger. Dichter und Denker im Dazwischen* (Tübingen: Klöpfer und Meyer, 1996), 73–74.

attention or are presented as further evidence of the pathological self-image that commentators derive from Günderrode's letters.<sup>10</sup>

A notable exception to this lack of serious consideration of Günderrode's ideas about the nature of the self is Karl Heinz Bohrer, although he, too, ultimately views Günderrode's conception of identity as a problematic and damaging model, stemming from and perhaps contributing to her own unhappiness. According to Bohrer, Günderrode understands the self as radically disjunctive, changing from moment to moment, and similar in this respect to the "momentary" or "catastrophic" self found in the writings of Clemens Brentano and Heinrich von Kleist.<sup>11</sup> Bohrer argues that these writers all view the true site of the self as the individual's subjective experience of ever-changing emotions, as opposed to what they see as a false image of a stable identity that is imposed by social roles and that can be communicated to others.<sup>12</sup> In this respect, these accounts of the self prefigure modern and post-modern ideas about selfhood and anxieties about authenticity, for example as expressed in the work of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and existentialism.

Bohrer claims that Günderrode "shares with both [Brentano and Kleist] the discovery of the autonomous 'I' that can only find itself in its subjectivity."<sup>13</sup> But he argues that, to a greater extent than Brentano or Kleist, Günderrode emphasises the radical discontinuity between the moments of the I, questioning whether and how the self could be seen as the same self in its different moments.<sup>14</sup> He claims: "It is the 'moment,' the ever new and different, that Günderrode turns against the demand for continuity of knowledge and the social."<sup>15</sup> A problematic outcome of this view, according to Bohrer, is that "the non-communicable identity of the creative moments implies a deceptive communication with the other."<sup>16</sup> Consequently, relationships with others are necessarily insincere and disappointing.

Bohrer is justified in claiming that Günderrode questions the possibility of full or consistent knowledge of the self, and that she replaces the traditional idea of a stable, continuous subject with a model of a radically changeable

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<sup>10</sup> E.g., Bürger, "Aber eine Sehnsucht," 38, 41; Ingeborg Drewitz, "Karoline von Günderrode (1780–1806)," in *Letzte Tage. Sterbegeschichten aus zwei Jahrtausenden*, ed. Hans Jürgen Schultz (Berlin: Kreuz-Verlag, 1983), 89.

<sup>11</sup> Karl Heinz Bohrer, "Identität als Selbstverlust. Zum romantischen Subjektbegriff," *Merkur* 38.4 (1984): 367–69; *Der romantische Brief. Die Entstehung ästhetischer Subjektivität* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Bohrer, "Identität als Selbstverlust," 377; see also *Der romantische Brief*, 76.

<sup>13</sup> Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 76. All translations are my own unless stated otherwise.

<sup>14</sup> Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 78–79.

<sup>15</sup> Bohrer, "Identität als Selbstverlust," 368.

<sup>16</sup> Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 120.

self. On the other hand, I dispute his claim that this position undermines the claims of social roles and relations upon an individual, or the possibility of fulfilling relationships. Instead, Günderrode demanded that social roles and relationships between individuals should be fulfilled on a different basis from how they are traditionally understood and engaged in. Rather than throwing the discontinuous self back upon itself in order to achieve self-knowledge and subjecthood in isolation with its “singularity of feeling,”<sup>17</sup> I argue that Günderrode’s self is constituted and stabilised in relationships with others, and that fulfilling relationships enable this in a way that is playful, joyful, and stimulating. While Günderrode experienced disappointments in some of her friendships, this is not a necessary consequence of her conception of the self or her ideal for fulfilling relationships; on the contrary, recognising the changeable nature of the self and its lack of transparency can foster improved relationships with others.

There is ample evidence for Bohrer’s claim that Günderrode imagined the self as a discontinuous progression of ever-changing individuals, different from moment to moment. This model is frequently referenced in her letters, and consistent with her view of nature and the human-nature relationship as presented in her published works. In a letter to Clemens Brentano, Günderrode writes:

Yes, I understand the moment in which you wrote to me; in general I never get further than understanding your moments a little. Of their connection and basic tone I know nothing at all. It often seems to me as if you had many souls; if I begin to know one of these souls well, then it departs and another steps into its place that I do not know and that I only stare at, surprised.<sup>18</sup>

And in another letter, also to Clemens:

[I]t seems to me, oddly, that I listen to how I speak and my own words seem almost stranger to me than those of strangers. Even the truest letters are, in my opinion, only corpses: they describe a life that inhabited them and, whether or not they are like the living, the moment of their life is already past. But for that reason, it seems to me (when I read what I wrote a while ago) as if I saw myself lying in my coffin and my two I’s stare at each other in amazement.

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<sup>17</sup> Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 119.

<sup>18</sup> Günderrode, letter to Clemens Brentano, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1803, in Weißenborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 89. Translations of Günderrode’s letters are my own, taken from *Philosophical Fragments* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[...] I know few people, and perhaps none completely accurately, for I'm very clumsy at observing others. Thus if I understand you in one moment, I can't conclude anything from this about all the others<sup>19</sup>

To her friend Carl Friedrich von Savigny, she writes "I believe my essence is uncertain, full of fleeting phenomena that come and go changeably and without enduring, inner warmth[,]""<sup>20</sup> and, to Kunigunde (Gunda) Brentano (Clemens' sister, and Savigny's future wife): "sometimes I have no opinion of myself at all, my self-observations are so fluctuating."<sup>21</sup>

The last letter, to Gunda, immediately continues by describing what G nderrode views as the essential unknowability of the self:

[...] In general it is totally incomprehensible to me that we have no other consciousness than perceptions of effects, never of causes. All other knowledge seems to me (when I think of this) not worthy of knowledge, as long as I do not know the cause of the knowledge, my faculty of knowledge. To me, this ignorance is the most unbearable lack, the greatest contradiction.<sup>22</sup>

These claims suggest that G nderrode views any substrate underlying and linking our experiences, which make up the moments of the self, as unknowable—if such a substrate exists at all. Our experiences of perceptions and feelings change constantly, undermining the grounds for continuity of identity. As a result, on G nderrode's account, past interactions with an individual do not provide a firm basis for expectations regarding that person in future. Furthermore, even obtaining a stable self-image is made difficult by these experiences of the self as fluctuating.

### 3. A Pathological Self

The above statements from G nderrode's letters have often been interpreted as indicating a dangerously fragmented self-image. In particular, several commentators have pointed to the passage quoted above in which G nderrode describes her "two Is" staring at each other as indicating self-

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<sup>19</sup> G nderrode, letter to Clemens Brentano, 1803, in Christa Wolf, ed., *Karoline von G nderrode. Der Schatten eines Traumes. Gedichte, Prosa, Briefe, Zeugnisse von Zeitgenossen* (Munich: Luchterhand, 1997), 211–12.

<sup>20</sup> G nderrode, letter to Carl Friedrich von Savigny, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1804, in Wei enborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 120; see also 285.

<sup>21</sup> G nderrode, letter to Kunigunde (Gunda) Brentano, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1801, in Wei enborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 75.

<sup>22</sup> G nderrode, letter to Kunigunde (Gunda) Brentano, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1801, in Wei enborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 75–76.

alienation.<sup>23</sup> However, as the statements cited above show, G nderrode applied this understanding of selfhood to others, not just herself. It seems clear that G nderrode is articulating a general idea about personhood, that is, about the lack of continuity and transparency of the self, rather than describing a pathology peculiar to herself and her self-image.

However, it could still be the case that this view provides an unhealthy or problematic view of human nature in general, that it is untenable or miserable to live according to this model. Bohrer suggests as much in his account of G nderrode’s friendships, which he describes as breaking down in the face of her insistence on the incommunicability of the irreducible moments of the self.<sup>24</sup>

The idea that the kind of momentary self presented in G nderrode’s writings is a damaged or incomplete non-functioning self is emphasised by Dieter von Burdorf in his remarks on Bohrer’s interpretation of G nderrode. According to Burdorf, Bohrer’s account underplays the alienation and solipsism that, Burdorf claims, result from such an idea of the self.<sup>25</sup> This is mainly a question of emphasis, but Burdorf’s claims are worth noting since they spell out the accusations of morbidity that are often levelled at G nderrode—including by Bohrer—with respect to her sense of self. According to Burdorf,

Karoline von G nderrode’s I, oriented to ideals and ideas and incessantly seeking itself, finds neither an equivalent opposite nor a place and stopping point in the world. This I can rather only orient itself to union with the All of nature [...]. But unity with nature means at the same time the cancelling out of individuation, the dissolution of the I. The idea of death is therefore omnipresent in G nderrode’s intellectual world; and from this perspective suicide can appear as the *ultima ratio* in the aporetic situation of the I.<sup>26</sup>

The claim that G nderrode lacked a coherent sense of self and that this contributed to her suicide is echoed in numerous accounts of G nderrode’s

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<sup>23</sup> For example Eva Horn, *Trauer schreiben: Die Toten im Text der Goethezeit* (Munich: Fink, 1998), 192; Christian Sch arf, “Artistische Ironie und Fremdheit der Seele. Zur  sthetischen Disposition in der Fr hromantik bei Friedrich Schlegel und Karoline von G nderrode,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift f r Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 72.3 (1998): 457–58; Christa Wolf, “Karoline von G nderrode—ein Entwurf,” in *Der Schatten eines Traumes*, 5–60, esp. 58.

<sup>24</sup> Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 78–79, 118–121.

<sup>25</sup> Dieter von Burdorf, “Diese Sehnsucht ist ein Gedanke, der ins Unendliche starrt.’  ber Karoline von G nderrode—aus Anla  neuer Ausgaben ihrer Werke und Briefe,” *Wirkendes Wort* 43.1 (1993): 53.

<sup>26</sup> Von Burdorf, “Diese Sehnsucht ist ein Gedanke, der ins Unendliche starrt.’,” 53.



writing and her death. Christa Bürger writes that Günderrode “has no image of herself; she cannot give herself her own form-figure [...]. She has only the will to form, but not the power to create her own[.]”<sup>27</sup> Bürger argues that this failing led Günderrode to throw herself (and the characters she created in her writings) into oblivion.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Carola Hilmes claims that “[t]he pervasive ambivalences in Günderrode’s life and writing culminated in her spectacular suicide.”<sup>29</sup> These interpretations present Günderrode’s fragmented self as too unstable and/or narcissistic to form adequate relationships with others. Without these connections, its only option for overcoming its fragmentation is to destroy its individuality in death, representing union with the whole of nature and the universe.

Eva Horn provides a separate argument for viewing Günderrode’s conception of the self as entailing suicide, claiming that Günderrode’s idea of the momentary self leaves a gulf between sign and signified that can only be removed by death, connecting the momentary self that is left in letters like a corpse (“in my coffin”) with the real corpse of the writer:

Günderrode, it shows itself clearly in her exchange of letters, is no player with language [...]—she takes the insight into the deadness of writing deadly seriously. Where words are dead letters, bodies without soul, where they only reflect the “pastness” of their “life that inhabits them,” there is only one possibility of giving writing back its truth: to lay under the dead writing one’s own dead body as referent.<sup>30</sup>

On Horn’s account, the lack of correspondence between sign and signified—the impossibility of being consistently true to one’s self or presenting this self truthfully to others—is drastic enough to require suicide in order to be resolved. Aside from the question of whether it is plausible to view the impossibility of sincerity and authentic self-relation as cause for Günderrode’s suicide, Horn’s account does not fit well with the relationship Günderrode describes between her letters and her later self that reads them. Günderrode’s past, “dead” selves, which left their signs in her letters, were living selves, now past and gone, “dead,” as it were, and it is these lost, living

<sup>27</sup> Bürger, “Aber eine Sehnsucht,” 37.

<sup>28</sup> Bürger, “Aber eine Sehnsucht,” 36–38.

<sup>29</sup> Carola Hilmes, “Welch ein Trost, daß man nicht leben muß.” Karoline von Günderrodes Inszenierung eines unweiblichen Heldentodes,” in *Ökonomie des Opfers. Literatur im Zeichen des Suizids*, ed. Günter Blumberger and Sebastian Goth with Christine Thewes (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2013), 169; see also Barbara Becker-Cantarino, “The ‘New Mythology’: Myth and Death in Karoline von Günderrode’s Literary Work,” in *Women and Death 3: Women’s Representations of Death in German Culture since 1500*, ed. Clare Bielby and Anna Richards (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 52, 68.

<sup>30</sup> Horn, *Trauer schreiben*, 192.

moments that are represented in the letters, not a dead self as such. Those momentary selves are gone, whether the present self is alive or dead. In other words, the death of the current or future self cannot retrieve the referent of these letters; the letters have never and can never refer to a current, present dead self, but refer to living selves of the past.

Like Horn and the other scholars mentioned above, Bohrer connects the “catastrophic” self to suicide. But rather than claiming that, for Günderrode, death overcomes the alienation of the individual by merging the individual with the whole or allowing a correspondence between self-descriptions and the self, Bohrer argues that death provides a form of narrative closure for the fragmented self. Bohrer contrasts the subjective and changeable models of the self of Günderrode, Brentano and Kleist with a traditional or *bürgerlich* conception of the self as stable, relatively transparent, and reliable, capable of happily engaging in productive relationships with others. By contrast, he claims, on Günderrode’s, Brentano’s and Kleist’s accounts, the self is fragmented and incoherent, and this unhappy isolation and emotional confusion requires some kind of reconciliation. Options for this reconciliation include developing a connection with nature, as Bohrer argues Brentano does, or suicide, as he argues occurs in the cases of Kleist and Günderrode.<sup>31</sup> On Bohrer’s interpretation, Kleist used his death to give a form of narrative coherence to the disarrayed emotional and experiential history of the subject: “in his motif of suicide, prepared for years, Kleist found his way back to the teleological projection of his I. As with Günderrode, too, suicide was not merely an expression of catastrophic momentaneity, but mediated natural-philosophically and culturally: in suicide he was finally able to convert discontinuity into continuity.”<sup>32</sup>

The idea that Günderrode’s conception of selfhood was morbidly unstable informs many readings of her work and letters, especially in relation to her own self-image. As described above, it is frequently asserted that Günderrode failed to construct a consistent or coherent self-identity, and that this contributed to her suicide. It seems to be more-or-less assumed by many commentators on her writings that a stable sense of self is necessary not only to enable rewarding relationships with others, but even to survive.

To be fair, Günderrode sometimes described herself as internally conflicted and unhappy. For example, she claims to have

a deplorable but incorrigible discrepancy in my soul; and it will and must remain so, for I am a woman, and have desires like a man, without

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<sup>31</sup> Bohrer, “Identität als Selbstverlust,” 372, 375, 378, 379; *Der romantische Brief*, 76.

<sup>32</sup> Bohrer, “Identität als Selbstverlust,” 375.

manly strength. That's why I'm so changeable, and so at odds with myself.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, Günderrode sometimes made claims that have been taken to support the argument that she hoped to construct a coherent, continuous identity in her writing, allowing commentators to propose that she failed in this attempt. In particular, in an often-quoted letter to Clemens, who had asked why she had chosen to publish her work, Günderrode wrote,

not knowing what I did, I thus broke the barriers that separated my innermost mind from the world; and I haven't yet regretted it, for the longing is always new and vivid in me to express my life in an enduring form, in a figure that would be worthy of joining the most excellent, greeting them and being in community with them.<sup>34</sup>

Along the same lines, in "Letters of Two Friends" in Günderrode's collection *Melete* (i.e., a piece intended for publication), Günderrode has her narrator say of their poetry: "I behold myself most happily in something my spirit has produced, and I only have true consciousness through this begotten thing[.]"<sup>35</sup>

However, on a close reading it does not seem that Günderrode meant these claims to suggest that she hoped to use her writing to construct or record a single, unconflicted, enduring self. The statement that the longing to express herself that she describes is "always new and vivid" immediately suggests that she means this effort to be undertaken repeatedly, rather than accomplished once and for all. As noted above, Günderrode maintained that, although a written record of a particular moment of the self may endure, that moment itself still passes and that self moves into the past. Her later, living self finds itself staring, amazed, at the past self recorded in the text.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Günderrode, letter to Gunda, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1801, in Weißenborn, ed., *Ich send Dir*, 79. This kind of statement has been used not only to support the argument that Günderrode's sense of self was fragmented, but also to explore Günderrode's critique of gender roles. See, e.g., Karen F. Daubert, "Karoline von Günderrode's 'Der Gefangene und der Sänger': New Voices in Romanticism's Desire for Cultural Transcendence," *New German Review* 8 (1992): 1–17; Gisela Dischner, "Die Günderrode," in *Bettine von Arnim. Eine weibliche Sozialbiographie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: 1977), 61–148; Elke Frederiksen, "Die Frau als Autorin zur Zeit der Romantik: Anfänge einer weiblichen literarischen Tradition," in *Gestaltet und Gestaltend. Frauen in der deutschen Literatur*, ed. Marianne Burkhard (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980), 83–108; Lorely French, "'Meine beiden Ichs': Confrontations with Language and Self in Letters by Early Nineteenth-Century Women," *Women in German Yearbook* 5 (1989): 73–89.

<sup>34</sup> Günderrode, letter to Clemens, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1804, in Weißenborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 151.

<sup>35</sup> SW 3:353.

<sup>36</sup> Günderrode, letter to Clemens, 1803, in Wolf, ed., *Schatten eines Traumes*, 211–12.

Furthermore, Günderrode's claim that she beholds herself "most gladly" in something she has produced, such as a piece of writing, also speaks against interpreting the encounter of her "two Is" as alienating. For Günderrode, the construction of the self through writing is not exhaustive, nor alienating, but a potentially gratifying record of certain aspects of the self at certain moments of its existence. The self that appears in writing is only one of the many selves that exist in a human lifetime—and, as we will see below, only one possible way of creating a sense of self.

Underlying the usual interpretation of Günderrode's claim that she is "at odds" with herself, as well as conclusions regarding the untenability of Günderrode's conception of the self in general as fluctuating and conflicted, is the premise that internal conflict, narrative incoherence, and breaks in continuity regarding one's sense of self are harmful, or at least a sign of damage. Yet these seem to be almost inescapable aspects of our experiences of ourselves and the courses of our lives. On a daily basis, we encounter conflicts, both minor and major, in our emotions, desires, evaluations, goals and principles, which we are aware of with varying degrees of clarity and reconcile with each other with varying degrees of success. Furthermore, our sense of who we are, including the stories we tell ourselves about the events of our lives and their trajectories and motivations, can vary, not only over long periods of time but often between different social situations or in different moods. And, as Günderrode identifies in her letters, each story we tell, or each snapshot we take of ourselves, is a partial image that only captures a few aspects of our identity, which may be more or less enduring over time.

If this is the case, then the construction of a coherent identity can only be provisional, and the construction of multiple identities—including mutually incompatible identities—becomes a possibility, even a desirable possibility. One is reminded of the later claim by Nietzsche that, while one needs a relatively stable view of the world and of oneself in order to function, this view can change to allow different, often conflicting aspects of the self and the world to be displayed and known.<sup>37</sup> According to Günderrode, too, rather than being a sign of incoherence, harmful internal conflict, or even

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<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft*, in *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (hereafter "KGW"), ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967–), vol. VI-2, sections 4, 34 and 40; *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, KGW vol. V-2, sections 107 and 290; *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, KGW vol. IV-2, section 427.

madness, the radical changeability of the self can be read as the condition of possibility for experimentation, self-expression, and freedom.

#### 4. Narrative Construction of Identity

Günderrode's emphasis on the incompleteness and selectivity that are necessarily involved in conceptualising the self draws on tensions in ideas about narrative self-construction that were current at the time she was writing, especially in Early German Romanticism. In their novels *Lucinde* (1799) and *Henry of Ofterdingen* (published 1802) Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis emphasise the selectivity of narrative in depicting their main characters and their formation, foregrounding the artificiality of the attempt to create a single, authoritative account of one's life. In *Lucinde*, Schlegel deliberately disrupts the chronology of the narrator's life story, drawing attention to his selectivity in choosing which features of his life to relate and in what order to present them.<sup>38</sup> These interruptions destroy the transparency of the writing and focus attention on the author's choices in how the narrator's life is presented, and therefore how his character is portrayed.<sup>39</sup> Dorothea Veit-Schlegel's novel *Florentin* (1801) pushes the tensions in this form of narrative autopoiesis to the point of critique. The title character spends the book attempting to construct an identity for himself, partly through his search for a homeland and the identity of his parents, and partly through narrative, as he describes his life to friends. However, despite meeting a woman who, it is hinted, is his mother,<sup>40</sup> Florentin fails to recognise his parentage. The novel ends with a line emphasising Florentin's failure in constructing a coherent identity for himself: "Florentin was nowhere to be found."<sup>41</sup> Thus, while the Early German Romantics overtly advocate aesthetic, poetic or narrative self-construction, they also highlight the contingent and created nature of these constructions and, especially in Veit-Schlegel's case, the way these often miss the mark and misrepresent what they attempt to articulate.

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<sup>38</sup> As Peter Firchow notes, "The interruptions, the lack of artful transitions, the chaotic confusion of proper time sequence, all these are not the result of inartistic insensitivity, but carefully planned occurrences" (*Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971 (1799)], 28; see also 45, 64, 104, 112, 126, 128–30).

<sup>39</sup> Novalis claims explicitly that the novelist "makes a well-ordered, lawlike series" "from his given crowd of accidents and situations" (*Schriften*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Paul Kluckhohn und Richard Samuel [Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1960–], II:580, no. 242).

<sup>40</sup> Dorothea Veit-Schlegel, *Florentin. Roman. Fragmente. Varianten*, ed. Liliane Weissberg (Berlin: Ullstein, 1987 [1801]), 96–100, 145–47.

<sup>41</sup> Veit-Schlegel, *Florentin*, 153.

Günderrode's model of the self can be read partly as a response to these accounts, which present the work of self-creation as a task that requires effort, skill and selection. This need for creative effort indicates the possibility of alternative constructions of selfhood, as well as of subsequent revisions to any self that has been constructed. Although Novalis' and Schlegel's protagonists (if not Veit-Schlegel's) ultimately succeed in creating a stable self through narrative, these authors nonetheless emphasise the experimentation and exploration of possibilities for the self, the need for selectivity and creativity in producing a story of oneself and one's life, and, therefore, the existence of multiple possible outcomes for how the self emerges.

As we saw above, it has often been claimed that, lacking a traditional, stable conception of the self as given, predictable and transparent, Günderrode's only options were to form a coherent self through writing or, if this failed, to experience life as an individual as irresolvably alienating (and, therefore, to long for annihilation). However, this does not reflect Günderrode's or her contemporaries' understanding of the ways in which self-identity is constructed. Like the Early German Romantics, Günderrode viewed narrative forms of identity construction as allowing multiple possible identities. As she writes to Bettina Brentano:

I have always read biographies with a peculiar joy, and in doing so it always appeared to me as if one could not invent a complete person, one always only comes up with one side, the complexity of human existence always remains unattained[.]<sup>42</sup>

Interpreted in light of this statement, Günderrode's claims about the impossibility of knowing a person on the basis of knowledge of their past "moments" are, as much as anything else, denials of the possibility of viewing any one understanding of an individual as authoritative. Like Clemens Brentano, Kleist, Novalis, Schlegel and Veit-Schlegel, Günderrode recognises the centrality of subjective experience—selectivity, perspective—to one's sense of self, at the same time as acknowledging that this subjectivity undermines the possibility of complete, or completely accurate, self-knowledge and self-representation.

As others have noted,<sup>43</sup> Veit-Schlegel's *Florentin* highlights the ways that the attempt to create an identity founders if it does not take account of others

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<sup>42</sup> Günderrode, letter to Bettina Brentano, in Weissenborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 268.

<sup>43</sup> Liesl Allingham, "Revolutionizing Domesticity: Potentialities of Female Self-Definition in Dorothea Schlegel's *Florentin* (1801)," *Women in German Yearbook* 27 (2011): 14–15; Martha Helfer, "Dorothea Veit Schlegel's *Florentin*: Constructing a Feminist Romantic Aesthetic,"

and their experiences. For Günderrode, too, the self does not create itself alone; rather, it is partly constituted through the perspectives of others. Liesl Allingham has explored how others are involved in the narrative construction of identity in Günderrode's writings, focusing on Günderrode's reworking of Ossian's poem "Darthula." As Allingham claims, the characters in Günderrode's version of this piece mythologise themselves and others through storytelling and commemoration. Allingham writes of Dartthula's lover, Nathos, that "In order to propagate his own heroic myth, Nathos rewrites [...] his life history, selecting only those aspects of his life to be remembered that affirm his heroism."<sup>44</sup> Thus, "Nathos demonstrates the selective process of memory"—its use of "exaggeration, emphasis, and omission[.]"<sup>45</sup> Nathos cannot construct this myth of himself as a hero on his own, however, as Allingham points out: "The establishment of myth also requires witnesses and an audience, voices with the power to disseminate the narrative."<sup>46</sup> These others can contest or amplify a particular myth, or simply maintain it in circulation, contributing to the constitution, evolution and/or maintenance of a mythological self that is based on carefully selected attributes of an individual.

As Allingham notes, like Nathos, Dartthula also "creates, picks and chooses" in her account of the events of the poem,<sup>47</sup> as does their enemy Caibar, who, in his version of the events, "selects the aspects of Dartthula most important to him[.]"<sup>48</sup> It is Caibar whose characterisation of Dartthula will ultimately be preserved: the poem ends with Caibar's bards singing laments for the fallen Dartthula. As Allingham writes, "With the power of selection, the victor Caibar determines which Dartthula will be remembered by emphasizing her as a desired object instead of acting subject, her beauty instead of her courage."<sup>49</sup> It is Caibar's account that is taken up by others (the bards, and those who hear their songs) to become the authoritative constitution of the character Dartthula.

Allingham is interested in the role of myth and memory in maintaining or countering hegemonic discourses, rather than their role in the development of a subject's own sense of self; however, the processes she describes also function, on Günderrode's account, to shape specific identities

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*German Quarterly* 69.2 (1996): 156; Laurie Johnson, "Dorothea Veit's *Florentin* and the Early Romantic Model of Alterity," *Monatshefte* 97.1 (2005): 42, 43.

<sup>44</sup> Allingham, "Counter-memory," 48.

<sup>45</sup> Allingham, "Counter-memory," 47.

<sup>46</sup> Allingham, "Counter-memory," 50.

<sup>47</sup> Allingham, "Counter-memory," 51.

<sup>48</sup> Allingham, "Counter-memory," 51.

<sup>49</sup> Allingham, "Counter-memory," 52.

for individuals. These identities, formed by one's own and others' selective processes of storytelling and characterisation, influence how individuals conceptualise themselves, as well as the kinds of behaviours and personalities they can manifest. In G nderrode's Ossian-inspired pieces, the main characters die and, therefore, this function of myth-making as creating identities for living individuals is not fully realised. However, elsewhere in G nderrode's work, and to an extent even within these pieces, we can see the role of others in the construction of an identity for the self. In "Darthula," the heroine takes up a sword after her father exhorts her "Go, grasp the sword of past battles!"<sup>50</sup> It is her father's interpellation of Dartthula as an agent—and a hero—that allows her to become one, despite her construction, according to the mores of the time, as a weak woman. (And, as noted above, this identity as a hero is altered again posthumously by Caibar, who presents Dartthula once more according to prevailing models of femininity.) In a similar way, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>51</sup> G nderrode's character Hildgund must first establish herself as an agent through interactions with her father and her fianc , before she can take control of her own and her country's destiny.

In these and other<sup>52</sup> examples, the question of gendered power relations is at the forefront, especially the ways in which the agency of women is constrained or promoted by the actions of men. However, within this account is also a model of how one's actions and identity are created in dialogue with others—with their help, or against their resistance, but always in interaction with other individuals and their perceptions of oneself. The self is not constituted by its own creative efforts alone, but always in a social context that creates and forecloses specific possibilities for who each person can be.

## 5. Stories and Images

The previous section explored the role of narrative in G nderrode's writings as a means of creating identity and the importance of other individuals in this process. But narrative is not the only, or even the primary, process that G nderrode claims is involved in constituting the self. G nderrode's account

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<sup>50</sup> SW 1:13.

<sup>51</sup> Ezekiel, "Metamorphosis, Personhood and Power," 773–91.

<sup>52</sup> A similar process occurs in G nderrode's play *Udohla*, where Nerissa can only make decisions about her own future after the Sultan creates the opportunity for her to do so (SW 1:230), and in the short dialogue "Mora." The latter, like "Darthula," features a female title character who performs heroic acts after being addressed as a heroic agent by male characters, but is then reified instead as a beautiful object of desire in bards' laments (SW 1:55–59).



of the radically changeable and momentary self picks up on another Early German Romantic trope: that of the fragment. For Günderröde, the self is, at its inception, a fragmentary self that narrative can only subsequently, and only provisionally, integrate into the relative whole of a continuous self. This position recalls Early German Romantic claims about the fragment, especially its application to the human being, conceived as a finite individual cut off from the whole of nature, the universe, or God, and striving to construct itself through a creative integration of the events of its life. Günderröde also views human beings as individuated through being split off from an original whole; however, as described above, her account emphasises the fragmentation of the self not only in relation to the whole, or to others, but also in relation to past and future moments of its existence. Günderröde's account also differs from more mainstream Romantic claims in two further ways. First, whereas Novalis and Schlegel emphasise the (never conclusively achieved) tendency towards system in both the fragment and human nature,<sup>53</sup> Günderröde's account of the fragmentary self stresses the possibility of not attempting to integrate the moments of the self into a whole. Second, Günderröde denies that this fragmentation entails alienation from others, insisting on the possibility of meaningful relationships in the absence of a narrative or, indeed, any kind of attempt at systematisation.

There are indications of this non-narrative means of constructing selfhood in the above example from "Darthula," in which Darthula's father exhorts her to grasp the sword and enter the battle. In itself, this interaction is not, or not yet, narrative. The moment in which Darthula's father engages her in this way enables a certain kind of action for Darthula, and these events may subsequently be incorporated into a story: the story of Darthula the hero, or the story of Darthula the tragic maiden. But for Günderröde there is something more fundamental happening when individuals interact: something prior to the incorporation of the moment of their interaction into a narrative.

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<sup>53</sup> See, for example, *Athenaeum Fragments* nos. 77, 116, 121, 220, 242, 259, 383 (respectively KFSa II: 176, 182, 185, 200, 205, 209, 236). There is not space here for a detailed investigation of the relationship between fragment and system in Early German Romanticism, or for its application to Early German Romantic accounts of the self. For discussion of these points, see, e.g., Manfred Frank, "Allegorie, Witz, Fragment, Ironie. Friedrich Schlegel und die Idee des zerrissenen Selbst," in *Auswege aus dem deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2007), 117–138; Laurie Johnson, "Reconciliation and Fragmentation: The Early Romantic Memory Model," in *The Art of Recollection in Jena Romanticism: Memory, History, Fiction, and Fragmentation in Texts by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002), 9–55; Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988 [1978]).

As described in the first part of this article, for G nderrode the self is most basically a momentary, fluctuating and discontinuous set of thoughts, impressions and emotions. This self is not fully known to itself and has no underlying substrate or necessary connection between its moments—at least, not that the self knows of or could ever know of. Narrative and biography can string these moments together in various ways, but the resulting stories, or identities, are contingent, subjective, incomplete, always subject to revision, and, in particular, do not capture everything about the self in any given moment.

However, rather than throwing the individual back upon itself as a succession of incommunicable moments, as Bohrer argues,<sup>54</sup> for G nderrode this entails the possibility of relationships between individuals that are not based on telling each other stories about themselves. For G nderrode, interactions between individuals at specific moments—that is, between the concurrent momentary selves of two (or more) individuals—contribute to the mutual constitution of their (momentary) selves, regardless of whether a narrative is created about this interaction. G nderrode’s claims, cited above, about not knowing a person’s present self based on their past selves indicate that she perceived a strong limit to the relevance for the current relationship of information beyond the immediate interaction. On this interpretation, G nderrode’s claim that one cannot know a person as they are now on the basis of one’s knowledge of them in the past is a statement about the priority of the relationship between two individuals in the immediacy of their engagement with each other. This immediate engagement is more important to G nderrode than the knowledge of a person that can be gained from a story, that is, from a narrative that subsumes this momentary relationship into a greater whole, or a claim that purports to be about a person over a period of time or over their lifetime.

Against Bohrer’s claim that G nderrode lost friends because she insisted on the incommunicability of the irreducible moments of the self, G nderrode’s letters show that she repeatedly insisted on the communicability of these moments.<sup>55</sup> She wrote to Savigny, for example, that:

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<sup>54</sup> Bohrer, *Der romantische Brief*, 119.

<sup>55</sup> G nderrode’s letters to Gunda, excerpted in the next section, often berate Gunda so harshly for not attempting to communicate in this way that one might suspect the opposite to Bohrer’s claim: that it was G nderrode’s insistence on communicating these moments that drove friends away. But other reasons likely contributed to the disappointing outcomes of some of G nderrode’s friendships. G nderrode’s relationship with Gunda was strained by their rivalry over Savigny, while Clemens’ attitude to G nderrode alternated between

I usually carry around a quiet little chamber in my mind; in this I live a private, secluded, happy life, interested in or loving some person, an idea, a science, or an art[.]<sup>56</sup>

This sounds like a self isolated by its absorption in its own thoughts and feelings; however, Günderrode continues: “if I want to usher someone inside and they won’t like it there, that can [...] be really painful for me.” To Gunda, similarly, she wrote:

Every interesting piece of knowledge, feeling and experience, if someone else doesn’t share it with me, is a mountain that separates me from the person with whom I’d like to join.<sup>57</sup>

The sharing of experiences, and of one’s inner life in its momentaneity, was vitally important to Günderrode’s understanding of both friendship and identity. This is not to say that Günderrode believed that one’s inner experiences could be conveyed perfectly accurately—as we have seen, she claims we cannot even know ourselves fully. Rather, she demanded from her friends that they make an earnest effort to share their experiences. In part, this effort served as a sign of real interest in each other,<sup>58</sup> but, as I argue in the next section, it was also important to Günderrode as a means of constructing identities that were both positive and, while still subject to change, more stable than a self created alone.

## 6. Friendship

Günderrode had numerous rewarding friendships that lasted until her death;<sup>59</sup> however, her most revealing statements about the role of others in constituting the self, and particularly of friends in helping construct a positive self-image, occur in the context of friendships that were fraught or breaking down—in particular, her friendship with Gunda Brentano. Günderrode

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overt romantic or sexual interest and chauvinistic put-downs, and she broke off her friendship with Bettina Brentano at Creuzer’s urging (Creuzer disliked the Brentanos, especially Clemens). Other important relationships in Günderrode’s life, such as those with her sisters and with Elisabetha von Mettingh, Christian Nees von Esenbeck and Susanne von Heyden, lasted until her or their deaths.

<sup>56</sup> Günderrode, letter to Savigny, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1804, in Weissenborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 115.

<sup>57</sup> Günderrode, letter to Gunda, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1801, Weissenborn, *Ich sende Dir*, 75.

<sup>58</sup> In her letters, Günderrode repeatedly refers to the importance of “taking an interest in” or “sympathising with” (*teilnehmen; Anteil nehmen*) one’s friends (e.g., letters to Karoline von Barkhaus, 4<sup>th</sup> July and 10<sup>th</sup> July 1799; letter to Gunda, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1801, in, respectively, Weissenborn, *Ich sende Dir*, 49, 51, 81).

<sup>59</sup> See above, footnote 52.

repeatedly complains to Gunda of the latter's failures in responding to her in a way that helps her create an image of herself:

I was often (I flatter myself) a true mirror to you, in which you could contemplate yourself; yes, I cast the image I received back to you with greater sincerity; but never yet have I contemplated myself in you—tell me, how is that? I don't always like to show myself (I've said so before), but when I have shown myself, then I love inordinately to behold myself again in others; for I hope the other will let me see a more beautiful image than I see myself. Or rather, sometimes I have no opinion of myself at all, my self-observations are so fluctuating.<sup>60</sup>

You put me in a bad position by not wanting to write to me like a person who has fallen in love with their echo; or, if I were to be really particular about it, much more serious, of course the echo is deaf to all questions, all pleas, but one can still imagine one hears an answer from it; and I can never do that with you. Suggest this to Clemens so he doesn't hold back from writing to me. If you don't, if you continue to keep your pen idle, then I have nothing of you but a memory, which may not look at all like your so-called I (if I see it again) any more, for you are changeable, doubly changeable: out of natural propensity, and out of coquetry, which anyway, as you say, is also natural.<sup>61</sup>

These citations reveal the importance, for Günderrode, of other people for presenting the self to itself. Others should be an echo, a mirror in which you can see yourself. In the first citation, Günderrode indicates that one's own experiences are too changeable to form a stable self-image, but that this stability can be provided by others. As we saw above, for Günderrode we have no knowledge of any substrate underlying our experiences, but here she suggests that seeing ourselves as others see us helps paint a more enduring picture of who we are than what we glean from our own fluctuating experiences. Importantly, this offers an alternative means of creating an identity and a (relatively) stable sense of self to narrative. This echo, or reflection, of the self cannot rely on memory, or on connections between past and present moments of the self. In the second citation, Günderrode adds that her memory may not reflect the way Gunda is any more: as time passes, Gunda changes, but in the absence of new interactions with her, Günderrode's image of her stagnates and becomes false. There is a balance in Günderrode's account between the need for stability and the need for accuracy—while others have more distance from us and less information,

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<sup>60</sup> Günderrode, letter to Gunda, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1801, in Weißenborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 75.

<sup>61</sup> Günderrode, letter to Gunda, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1801, in Weißenborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 79–80.

allowing a less changeable, more manageable conception of the self to emerge, too much distance can result in a false, reified image of who we are, based on out-of-date information.

Although, as we will see just below, truth, or rather honesty or earnestness, is very important to Günderrode in engaging with others, she does not hold up absolute truth, in the sense of correspondence to facts, as the ideal. Instead, she recognises that the images cast back to us by others are subjective and incomplete, and can be more or less pleasant. In the above letter, she says she “hope[s] the other will let me see a more beautiful image than I see myself.” This role of the other, which can allow a loving relationship to the self, can, however, be overplayed, leading to falsification. Günderrode writes:

to me it seems so sweet to be loved by excellent people; to me it's the most flattering proof of my own value. I'm too weak against these too seductive flattering voices: they can make me unfaithful to myself. Often and in vain I have resisted myself.<sup>62</sup>

These scenarios seem not only plausible, but borne out by everyday experience. We do sometimes encounter people who confront us with an image of ourselves that is less lovely than we would like, as well as those who have images of us that are beguilingly flattering. Our sense of worth and our self-image is often affected by encounters with others' views of us. It is a strength of Günderrode's account that it recognises the variability of others' views of the self as well as their constitutive role in self-understanding.

On the other hand, Günderrode's letters reveal not only the desire to have a positive or flattering self-image, but also a desire to be known truly. She writes to Savigny:

I've told you before, dear Savigny, how it's almost too much a need for me to express myself, when I'm very merry or sad or gripped by anything else unusual. I'm also often in conflict with myself and doubt myself, and seek another's judgement, someone else's approbation, in order to be happy in myself again. In such cases I then easily let myself be carried away, trusting someone who can't give me what's missing, misunderstands me or handles me clumsily. The state within me that follows such an incident is the most adverse for me. I'd like to change that, would like to always speak with you about such things and write to you about them, can I? Are you not much too busy? I'm afraid you might listen to me and answer out of a kind of generosity that I wouldn't like

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<sup>62</sup> Günderrode, letter to Gunda, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1801, in Weissenborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 83.

to have, so don't do that; answer your friend without any consideration—that is, really like a friend.<sup>63</sup>

The above passage tells us what marks a true friend, for Günderrode. It is not that someone should view every aspect of the changing feelings and experiences that a person undergoes—that would be impossible, even for the self itself. Rather, with a true friend it should be possible, first, to talk openly about these feelings and experiences, and, second, to trust them to respond honestly and with care. Importantly, this response should not be motivated by “generosity” or characterised by “consideration,” while it should also not be “clumsy”—a friend should not lie or flatter, but should know how to respond in a way that is helpful. In places, Günderrode indicates that an important element of this proper response of a friend is simply wanting to engage with the other, and making the effort to respond. She complains:

I don't know, Gunda, whether I should tell you anything about me, because I can almost certainly assume that you can't take an interest in what I'd like to tell you about me. The onesidedness of our correspondence also stirs up unpleasant feelings in me. I strike tones and always only hear the same monotonous sounds; it makes me almost lose patience that new tones don't alternate with those that have already died away.<sup>64</sup>

It is clear from Günderrode's many letters to Gunda and exhortations for her to write more, and more honestly, that she values Gunda's friendship and would like Gunda to make this effort. In fact, it seems obvious in reading the letters that Günderrode's anger at Gunda is at least partly due to her feeling of rejection from Gunda not making this kind of effort. The letter quoted just above continues:

You almost become too strange to me to usher you into the most essential [eigentlichsten] parts of my inner world; nonetheless, you're a guest one may not leave standing outside the door. A great quandary. I thought you could be led into a not-too-distant compartment and the actors (thoughts, fantasies, feelings) allowed to perform for you, without letting you come behind the curtains, especially not to see the deepest

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<sup>63</sup> Günderrode, letter to Savigny, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> December 1803, in Weißenborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 112.

<sup>64</sup> Günderrode, letter to Gunda, 20<sup>th</sup> September 1801, in Weißenborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 81. See also Günderrode and Gunda, letter to Savigny, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1804, 113–15.

workings. —But I can't do that Gunda, at least it's too difficult for me. I must either close the theatre altogether or unveil what is deepest too.<sup>65</sup>

Günderrode wants her friends to know her not only in her most overt and public characteristics, but intimately, including the parts normally kept hidden from the world. This requires an effort both from oneself, in revealing these deeper aspects of one's personality, and from the friend, in engaging with them and reflecting them back truly, without flattery but also without clumsiness. It is clear that Günderrode would like Gunda to be closer to her, a better friend, but does not feel Gunda is making this kind of effort.

What Günderrode describes as characteristic of true friendship is an attitude of open-heartedness and care in engaging with others—both in expressing oneself and in reflecting the other. She contrasts this approach with a more superficial interaction with others, which she claims both Gunda and Clemens, in light of their own superficiality, better deserve from her:

From Gunda one must not expect indulgence, mercy, support, I thought, and it's true: anyone who entrusts their fortunes to you trusts the shifting sea. You're only a spectacle; one must enjoy you, and not more, for you are truly a beautiful multifarious play suited to beholding. Anyone who takes you otherwise doesn't understand you, anyone who wants you otherwise harms the pleasure they could enjoy in viewing you. It's certainly so: with respect to you I will accustom myself more and more to observation.<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, Günderrode writes to Clemens: "it's good to observe you, and pleasant; but one should only want to observe you. It this view true or false?"<sup>67</sup>

Importantly, both Clemens and Gunda, the recipients of these accusations of superficiality, were disappointing and ultimately untrustworthy acquaintances for Günderrode. Among other things, Gunda married Savigny, from whom Günderrode herself was hoping for a proposal. Clemens, meanwhile, wavered between praising Günderrode's work and denigrating it, pressured her romantically, and seems to have tried to sabotage Günderrode's relationships with Savigny and Creuzer.<sup>68</sup> The

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<sup>65</sup> Günderrode, letter to Gunda, 20<sup>th</sup> September 1801, in Weißenborn, ed., *Schatten eines Traumes*, 81.

<sup>66</sup> Günderrode, letter to Gunda, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1806, in Weißenborn, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 170.

<sup>67</sup> Günderrode, letter to Clemens, 1803 (?) in Wolf, ed., *Schatten eines Traumes*, 212.

<sup>68</sup> See letters from Clemens to Günderrode, 1<sup>st</sup> May and 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1804 and Günderrode's responses in May and on 10<sup>th</sup> June in *Weißenborn*, ed., *Ich sende Dir*, 131–36, 142–47, 151. For discussion of Günderrode's relationship with Clemens, and her friendships in general,

changeability of their selves from one moment to another, and the different levels of trust that could be placed in them at different times, were thus not simply theoretical issues for Günderrode. Rather, their variable behaviour highlighted the need for relationships with them to be based on the current interaction, rather than on past associations.

Despite the lack of stability in the self in Günderrode's conception, she does not view the self as inherently lacking possibilities of relating to others in enduring, reliable, rewarding ways. In fact, as we have seen, she draws a strong contrast between fulfilling relationships and those that falter at superficiality. The contrast she describes is not between fleeting appearances and a stable self that underlies them—as we can see from her claims that knowing one of Clemens' "moments" does not equip her to know him at other times and that Gunda may have changed unrecognisably from Günderrode's image of her. Nor is the contrast one between a stable appearance (for example, the stable self that Bohrer sees as provided through social roles, or, alternatively, a self stabilised through the construction of a narrative about its origins and nature) and a changeable set of experiences that lies beneath it, perhaps a set of experiences that are not or cannot be shared (as Bohrer describes in Brentano's and Kleist's accounts). Rather, the contrast that Günderrode sees is one that exists between a changeable, superficial surface that others can relate to only externally, can only watch without trying to understand or go deeper, and a changeable interior existence that can be shared (always only in part) with those one trusts, who also share their own inner lives with you.

On Günderrode's model, this open-hearted sharing of one's interior existence is the way in which a reliable, functioning self can be built, one that has a positive self-image and enjoys fulfilling connections to others. In this relationship, in which one person expresses themselves as openly as they can and the other "echoes" or reflects their expressions back to them, one is not led astray by the judgments—hostile or flattering—of strangers. No self-image provided by one's friends can ever be fully accurate or sufficient to the entirety of one's personhood, but the goal is not complete accuracy of self-knowledge or of knowledge of the other. Rather, the continual sharing and reflecting of experiences creates pairs and groups of always-changing individuals in interaction with each other. In good relationships, these interactions are pleasurable and rewarding, as individuals learn about themselves and others, experience the joy of sharing and of deep and earnest

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see Margarete Lazarowicz, *Karoline von Günderrode. Porträt einer Fremden*, *Europäische Hochschulschriften* I.923 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1986), esp. 320–33.



communication, and facilitate each other's agency and development. On the other hand, interactions with others can also be unsatisfying or even toxic—sources of self-doubt, insecurity, anxiety, even self-loathing, and relationships that close off possibilities for agency and self-expression rather than help to proliferate them. As noted by one of G nderrode's biographers, G nderrode seems to have several of the latter in her life,<sup>69</sup> but it is a strength of her model of the socially constituted self that it explains both this kind of relationship and the more fruitful and rewarding forms of friendship that she longed for and knew were possible.

## 7. Conclusion

G nderrode's account of the socially-constituted self and its relationships with others is intuitively plausible. Most of us are fortunate enough to have experienced relationships that bring us pleasure and allow us to be our best selves, as well as unsatisfying or toxic relationships. We also know from experience that we are rarely if ever fully transparent to ourselves, let alone to others; that we change over time; and that our identity depends in part on the ways in which we are reflected in the perceptions of others, both through the stories they tell about us and the ways they interact with us in the moments we spend together. As Bohrer argues, having recognised the self as changeable and untransparent G nderrode needs to provide a new basis for fulfilling and functional relationships with others, an alternative to the kinds of relationships that are mediated by social roles and relatively static identities. What is astonishing is the extent to which G nderrode progressed towards theorising such a basis, in terms of the ways that others stabilise the self, not only through narrative but also by providing images in which one can see oneself, as one is now, reflected in a way that is easier to grasp than one's own, private experiences of oneself. This has largely been missed in readings of G nderrode's work. The positive and productive aspects of G nderrode's philosophical thought have also been masked by her unhappiness and suicide, which have guided commentators to interpret her statements about selfhood as self-descriptions of an unhappy, unhealthy self. Meanwhile, her disappointments in love and friendship have been interpreted as *entailed* by her understanding of the possibilities for interactions of the self with others, rather than only potentially *explained* by this model: as examples of relationships with individuals who were unwilling to share themselves in ways that G nderrode thought essential for rewarding friendships. G nderrode's accounts of self-identity and friendship explain the

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<sup>69</sup> Lazarowicz, *Portr t einer Fremden*, 279, 366.

formation of both positive and negative self-image, of both more and less accurate self-image, and of both fulfilling and unfulfilling (and more and less authentic) relationships with others.

For Günderröde, interactions with others can be profound and genuine, despite the impossibility of ever knowing each other fully and with complete accuracy. In other words, the incomplete communication or sharing of experiences does not entail unfulfilling ways of being together. A true friendship is based on mutual effort in sharing aspects of oneself and engaging with the other's effort to share themselves. This effort is intrinsically satisfying, but is also important for creating a functional conception of the self. The stability that Bohrer claims is necessary for a functioning self and that he argues is lacking in Günderröde's account is in fact presented by Günderröde as most importantly mediated by others' stabilising images of oneself, rather than through narrative coherence or homogeneity or continuity of self-experience. Whether this stabilising influence is joyful and liberating, multiplying possibilities for expressing aspects of the self and for agency, or whether it is oppressive and constraining, depends on the actual relationships in which one finds oneself.

# Symphilosophie

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## Rahel Levin Varnhagen's Philosophical Reflections on Moral Character, *Bildung*, and Sociability

*Catalina Elena Dobre\**

### ABSTRACT

The main focus of this article is to recover some of the philosophical ideas of one of the most important writers and thinkers of German Romanticism: Rahel Levin Varnhagen. Neglected for a long time, this article considers Varnhagen's education, life experiences, and involvement in German cultural life at the end of the 18th and start of the 19th century. After this brief reconstruction of her life and writings, one of the main objectives of this text is to understand the manner in which Varnhagen develops her original and crucial philosophical ideas relating to *Bildung* or education, the moral character of human beings, ethical community life, and sociability.

*Key Words:* Rahel Levin Varnhagen, Philosophy, Ethics, *Bildung*, Character, Sociability, Community

### RESUME

L'objectif de cet article est de mettre en lumière l'intérêt philosophique de certaines des idées avancées par une des écrivaines et penseuses longtemps négligée du romantisme allemand : Rahel Levin Varnhagen. L'article retrace l'histoire personnelle de Varnhagen, son éducation et son implication dans la vie culturelle allemande de la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> et du début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles. Après un bref aperçu de sa vie et de ses écrits, il s'attache à analyser comment Varnhagen développe des vues philosophiques originales et décisives sur les notions de culture (*Bildung*), de caractère moral de l'être humain, de vie communautaire éthique et de sociabilité.

*Mots clés :* Rahel Levin Varnhagen, philosophie, éthique, *Bildung*, caractère, sociabilité, communauté

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\* PhD in Philosophy, Professor and Researcher at Anáhuac University, Av. Lomas Anáhuac 46, Lomas Anahuac 52786 Naucalpan de Juárez, Mexico City – katalina.elena@yahoo.com.mx

## 1. Introduction

Four years after her death, in 1837, in a publication called *Revue des Deux Mondes de Paris*, Astolphe de Custine described his lifelong friend Rahel Levin Varnhagen von Ense (1771-1833) in the following manner: “she had the head of a sage and the heart of an apostle, and in spite of that, she was a child and a woman as much as anyone can be. [...] For a person who lived her life as Rahel did, nothing is impossible.”<sup>1</sup>

This testimony illustrates just how uniquely Rahel Levin Varnhagen was viewed by many of her peers during her lifetime, not to mention the extent to which she was appreciated and admired by her friends even after her death. She lived and wrote her ideas during the highpoint of German Romanticism, and was close friends with some of the principal thinkers of philosophical romanticism and German idealism. These included: Friedrich Schleiermacher, Friedrich Schlegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Novalis, Henrich Heine, J.G. Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, and others. And not least, she personally knew many of the other celebrated women writers of the time, such as Madame de Staël, Dorothea Veit, Caroline Schlegel-Schelling, and Bettina von Arnim. Due to her position within this nexus of relationships, Georg Brandes designated Rahel as among “the most important”<sup>2</sup> figures of her time.

However, Heidi Thomann Tewarson, one of the leading researchers on the thought of Rahel Varnhagen, claims that she shares more affinity with enlightened humanism than with German romanticism, for she often criticized the latter.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding, in the present article I maintain that Rahel Varnhagen should be considered as a significant figure in the German romantic tradition, precisely on account of her interest in the ideal of *Bildung*, and her original epistolary style and friendships with the main romantic thinkers, as well as her commitment to adhering to the ideals of romanticism.

Steeped in literature, philosophy and education, I argue that Rahel’s work contributed to the development of culture and to a change in the mentality and traditions of her time. Nevertheless, until only a few years ago, she was long considered an *outsider* in the cultural fields of the epoch. Her ideas now continue to be reassessed and represent a valuable contribution to the cultural and philosophical thought of the period. Considered by many of

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. 4 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1899), 110. Cf. Heidi Thomann Tewarson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen. The Life and Work of a German Jewish Intellectual* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Georg Brandes, “Young Germany,” in *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*, trans. Mary Morison, Vol. 6 (London: William Heinemann, 1906), 409.

<sup>3</sup> See H.T. Tewarson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen*, 134.

her contemporaries to be a woman of unusual intelligence and sensitivity and with a capacity for dialogue, Rahel Levin Varnhagen, despite not writing any systematic treatise on philosophy, could still be understood as a ‘philosopher with a poet’s heart.’ Tewarson stresses that “Rahel’s attitude toward philosophy was highly personal.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, for Rahel, philosophy did not represent some kind of an abstract realm; rather, philosophy was a form of literature and art that had to be related to our manner of being and existence. She places an emphasis on truth and authenticity, revealing how crucial an ethical approach is for an understanding of life. In her writings – the majority of which are letters – she develops ideas on education, women’s emancipation in society, moral character, friendship, community, and sociability. All these topics underscore the extent to which Rahel was a woman with incredibly strong and modern convictions.

Many anthologies on women writers often only briefly describe her as a German writer and nothing else, mostly completely ignoring Rahel’s ideas and philosophical views. The present article treats her as much more than a writer: Rahel should be seen as a genuine thinker. To be clear, there already exist countless studies acknowledging her significance in the fields of culture and literature.<sup>5</sup> However, it is her contribution to philosophical thought that is still either unknown or undervalued. The difficulty of recovering Rahel Levin Varnhagen’s philosophical thought for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is greatly increased because for some researchers she is to be understood merely as a minor figure in the intellectual field of the late eighteenth and early

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, see the following studies (predominantly in the German and English languages), highlighting the fundamental role of Rahel Varnhagen in the development of the culture of her time. In German: Otto Berdrow, *Rahel Varnhagen: Ein Lebens und Zeitbild* (1902); Carola Stem, *Der Text meines Herzens: Das Leben der Rahel Varnhagen* (1994); Emma Graf, *Rahel Varnhagen und die Romantik* (2014); Barbara Hahn, *Begegnungen mit Rahel Varnhagen* (2015). In English, see the writings of Ellen Key, *Rahel Varnhagen. A Portrait* (1913); and the interesting text of Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewess* (1957); the valuable reflections of Georg Brandes in his book, *Young Germany*; also Jennings Vaughan’s book, *Rahel: Her Life and Letters* (1876); Bertha Meyer, *Salon Sketches. Biographical Studies of Berlin Salons of the Emancipation* (1938); Heidi Thomann Tewarson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen. The Life and Work of a German Jewish Intellectual* (1998). Tewarson’s emphasizes the burgeoning interest in the ideas of Rahel Varnhagen, but more in the field of literature. In French, see Georges Solovief’s book, *Rahel Varnhagen: une révoltée féministe à l’époque romantique* (2000). In addition, there are a number of specialized articles: Kay Goodman, “Poesis and Praxis in Rahel Varnhagen’s Letters,” *New German Critique. An Interdisciplinary Journal of German Studies* 27 (1982): 123-139; Natalie Naimark-Goldberg, “Reading and Modernization: The Experience of Jewish Women in Berlin Around 1800,” *Nashim: Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies and Gender Issue* 15 (Spring 2008): 58-87; Goldstein J. David, “Hannah Arendt’s Shared Destiny with Rahel Varnhagen,” *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 6, no. 1 (2009).

nineteenth century. For other scholars, she is above all a woman who simply wrote “love letters”; while for others still, her thought has to be primarily understood from the perspective of her relation to Judaism.

The central aim of this article is to try and rehabilitate a number of Rahel’s key philosophical ideas, laying the foundation for her genuine ethical reflections on *Bildung*, moral character, person, sociability and community. I consider that her education, life experience and involvement in German cultural life at the turning point of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot be separated from the development of her philosophical reflections. From this standpoint, Rahel Levin Varnhagen is not simply an epistolary writer, but an independent philosophical thinker who both inspired other important philosophers of the period, and who can be understood as a pioneer in the creation of what in the twentieth century is called: the philosophy of community or dialogical philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Rahel Varnhagen’s Singular Life and Writings

Rahel Federike Antonie Levin Varnhagen was born in Berlin on 19 May 1771. She was the first daughter of the marriage between Markus and Chaie Levin, a Jewish family which could trace its roots back to families that were brought to Berlin from Vienna by King Frederick Wilhelm I in order to bolster the city’s economy. Her father was 48 years old when she was born. He was widely respected and was among the few Jewish men under the protection of the King. However, Markus Levin was also a rather authoritarian father, a fact that caused Rahel a great deal of suffering. He became a famous banker and jeweller, and Rahel was able to enjoy a good education from her early childhood onwards, and sometimes even had the fortune of being present at the intellectual meetings that were organized in the family home. Influenced by the Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, her father decided to open up his home and transform it into a focal point of social and cultural encounters. Despite her father’s many flaws, there is no doubt that this idea inspired and was beneficial to Rahel’s future life. Although her father was extremely tyrannical, as a teenager she managed to take refuge in her world, books and sanctuary, or as she called it: *her room*, a private space where she taught herself to be stronger and to control her emotions by reading Goethe and discovering in his works her own inner strength.

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<sup>6</sup> Represented in particular by philosophers such as Martin Buber, Emmanuel Mounier, and Emanuel Levinas.

Hannah Arendt has described Rahel in the following manner: “She had great originality, ingenuity, and was exaggeratedly curious.”<sup>7</sup> It was precisely this intellectual curiosity that helped her over time develop several skills that would later serve her when opening the doors of one of the most famous salon societies of the time. Another quality, revealed by her contemporaries and biographers, was her ability to “read” people, to immediately know what kind of person her interlocutor was. This quality would subsequently serve her well when she developed the ability to create an authentic manner that brought people together.

But her real vocation and main task in life had always been to search for the truth and a certain wisdom of the heart. Her inspiration for pursuing this goal were Goethe’s reflections on *self-education*. In this regard, her life’s vocation was to develop her own character with the primary propose of serving others by means of understanding, tolerance, love, and the truth. To create this ideal of self-education, Rahel had to undergo this process in relation to the limitations of her own social and moral circumstances. As a woman, and also as a Jewish woman, it was impossible for her to have access to an educational institution and so she was excluded from having a profession. As numerous sources relate, she was a woman of profound sensitivity, inclined towards poetry, nature, and the arts. She had an internal curiosity that led her to expand the horizons of her studies and interests in order to forge a cultivated spirit. She was undoubtedly an artistic soul: a piano virtuoso and admirer of painting, with Rembrandt and Dürer among her favourites. At the same time, as a lover of writing she became a connoisseur of older and contemporary German and European literature, especially the works of Novalis, Friedrich Schiller, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Hume, Diderot, Rousseau, Montaigne; and not least, as mentioned, of Goethe, who became her idol as it were, the mirror ultimately containing the reflections of her own most trying and lonely moments. It is hard to overstate just how much Goethe meant to her: he was both an inspiration and her most faithful literary companion. She constantly refers to him in her letters, even dreaming about his characters, and she was extremely passionate about his poetry. She read the master with an almost religious devotion and he became her central intellectual touchstone.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> H. Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewess* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins, 1997), 109.

<sup>8</sup> She read all of Goethe’s works, with *Wilhelm Meister*, *Faust*, and *Iphigenia* having a lasting impact on her.

Due to her well-known and unconditional admiration of Goethe, she was responsible for transmitting this passion to her friends and to the entire romantic generation. Georg Brandes states in this regard:

Rahel owes her literary distinction to the fact that she was the first in the literary circles of Berlin to comprehend and proclaim Goethe's real greatness. [...] Long before the criticism of the brothers Schlegel established his position beyond dispute, Rahel had introduced the cult of the great, uncomprehended, misjudged genius in her circle in Berlin, had everywhere proclaimed the praises of his illuminating word, and declared his name to be a holy, a consecrated name.<sup>9</sup>

She was convinced that Goethe represented the spirit of the epoch. Varnhagen finds countless answers in Goethe's writings connected with her status as a woman, as well as in relation to the ideas that she herself later developed.

In 1807, she met Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who at that time frequented Henriette Herz's salon.<sup>10</sup> Rahel also read his philosophical writings, and according to Mary Hargrave: "no one absorbed Fichte's philosophy on the realization of the ego"<sup>11</sup> better than her. She attended Fichte's lectures, and the *Wissenschaftslehre* (Doctrine of Science) had a strong impact on her. In a letter to a friend, she wrote concerning the philosopher:

To invent a [philosophical] system can mean nothing else but to investigate, name, [and] classify the possibilities of the human spirit, and to assign it the laws according to which it must act, including all the ideas (or inspirations) it may have. This is what Fichte does.<sup>12</sup>

All her life Rahel viewed Fichte as an apostle of freedom and spoke of him with unbounded admiration and affection, as though he had been her teacher. This is why much later, just after Fichte's death, she wrote to her husband in February 1814:

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<sup>9</sup> G. Brandes, "Young Germany," in *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*, 286.

<sup>10</sup> Henriette Herz was another famous woman in Berlin at the end of 18th century who created a reading circle (salon) called the *Tugendbund* (*The Association of Virtue*). Bertha Meyer writes: "The reading circles, however, encouraged the study of literature in the language of the originals". They studied Shakespeare, Dante, and also read Greek and Latin texts. Cf. B. Meyer, *Salon Sketches. Biographical Studies of Berlin Salons of the Emancipation* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1938), 142.

<sup>11</sup> M. Hargrave, *Some German Women and Their Salons* (New York: Brentano, 1912), 107.

<sup>12</sup> R. Varnhagen, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Konrad Feilchenfeldt, Uwe Schweikert and Rachel E. Steiner (Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 1983), Vols. 1-10 (= GW), GW 3:313. English translation cited in: H.T. Tewarson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen*, 94.



Although two of your letters lie before me that I long waited for with restless impatience until they arrived the day before yesterday ... let us first speak of our revered teacher and friend, into whose hand I would have placed my honour and life without a moment's hesitation; a thought I expressed a thousand times with my eyes but never said, and which I now *severely* regret, because one noble thinking being cannot conceive another one any higher, and which, miserably, I never had the courage to say! Let us speak of *Fichte!* – Germany has closed one of its eyes; like the cyclops, I now tremble for the other one!<sup>13</sup>

With regard to the philosopher Hegel, Varnhagen found some of his philosophy to be rooted in Fichte, but read and loved his *Encyclopedia*:

Excellent. Almost every line [is] an irrefutable definition. I underline and write on the side. I find Fichte. What else? He who traced the outline of the human spirit ... must find it again in each new depiction. All thinking and investigating is a rediscovery of a method. ... [I am] one of the students who loves and understands it best: or rather understands and loves it.<sup>14</sup>

Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* also represented a decisive text for Rahel. From Schiller, she grasped that beauty is no stranger to the moral nobility of human nature. This work showed her that human beings are capable of sculpting their inner being, and by abandoning the realm of needs and choosing freedom, they may recreate, ennoble and render their own human character more beautiful.

In this regard, Ellen Key has argued that the

Germanic race and culture, in the midst of which Rahel grew up, undoubtedly contributed to deepen her nature, to give it greater diversity. But the invincibility of its individuality, the indestructibility of its fire, the lightning rapidity of its clear-sightedness, the profundity of its meditation, the keenness of its analysis, the wildness of its despair, the jubilation of its gratitude – all these are as Eastern as the Psalms and Ecclesiastes.<sup>15</sup>

Ellen Key is here referring to the eastern roots of Rahel's personality: a deep and warm disposition, combined with a sense of reality and mysticism.

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<sup>13</sup> German original in: H. Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen, Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik* (Munich: Piper, 2020), 277. (English translation by David W. Wood). Cf. J. Vaughan, *Rahel: Her Life and Letters* (London: Henrys King & Co.1876), 135.

<sup>14</sup> From a letter to Ludwig Robert, quoted in: H.T. Tewarson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen*, 211.

<sup>15</sup> E. Key, *Rahel Varnhagen. A Portrait*, 23-24.

Rahel Varnhagen was an extremely cultivated woman. Heidi T. Tewarson underscores that “she was a thorough and actively engaged reader who considered literature and philosophy as nothing less than guides to life and self-knowledge.”<sup>16</sup> The works she read were not common for a young woman<sup>17</sup>; they reveal a special interest in topics as diverse as literature and politics, art, education and philosophy. Although she never assumed she was a philosopher, she still lived a life dedicated to philosophical reflection.

This is demonstrated by Rahel Varnhagen’s interest in creating and hosting two salons, which were considered Berlin’s most important salons at that time. These salons were typically open-minded spaces for the cultivation of lofty ideas. She created her first salon when she was just 19 years old. It was open from 1790 until 1806, upstairs in her home in the Jägerstraße, where she received numerous representatives of intellectual Berlin. The salon was a small mixed community, free of prejudices, and outside rules and conventions. The originality, wit, and vivacity of Rahel’s spirit<sup>18</sup> is what made these gatherings possible. Many of the most important figures of the time participated in this salon, including: members of the Royal Family, especially Prince Luis Ferdinand and his sister, Karl Gustav von Brinkman (a Swedish poet and ambassador), the Humboldt brothers, Friedrich Gentz, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Friedrich Schlegel, Ludwig and Friedrich Tieck, Clemens Brentano, Friedrich August Wolf and Jean Paul (Richter), and Johann Gottlieb Fichte. A few women friends also attended, like Henriette Herz or Dorothea Mendelssohn-Veit. Jennings Vaughan claims that this salon was a kind of “miniature Renaissance,”<sup>19</sup> since art, philosophy, literature, theology, and humanism in general, were all topics of discussion.

It was only after she had suffered a number of profound life experiences, and after she had become Mrs. Varnhagen von Ense (on account of her marriage to Karl Varnhagen), and after Berlin had been shaken by Napoleon’s war against Prussia, that Rahel Varnhagen decided to summon all her forces, in 1827, to open up once again the doors of her home in Berlin,

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<sup>16</sup> H.T. Tewarson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen*, 30.

<sup>17</sup> It is well-known that the role of women in society at that time was a very restricted one. Like Rahel Levin, women were educated in dance, music, French, *belles-lettres*, and came from the upper-middle class. Many of these women were not educated in schools nor accepted into universities, but rather received instruction from their parents or private tutors, and their models were the intellectuals of the Enlightenment. Rahel was an exception, insofar as she not only wished to be educated, but furthermore to develop her personality; here she not only read fiction, but also philosophical texts that were considered inappropriate for women. She especially read Spinoza, Rousseau, Greek literature, Shakespeare, Dante, and of course, as mentioned, German literature and German philosophy.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. H. Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen*, 126.

<sup>19</sup> J. Vaughan, *Rahel: Her Life and Letters*, 3.

this time in the Französische Straße, in order create with the unconditional support of her husband what would become known as the second salon society. This second salon was therefore the joint project of both Rahel and Karl Varnhagen. After many difficult years of suffering, war, and loneliness, Rahel endeavoured to keep her mind fresh and her spirit alive, to retain her unconventional manner and ability to adapt to the new challenges of the times. Hosting a salon was something novel for Karl Varnhagen; for Rahel, it was a natural continuation of her first salon, which had been “based on her humanistic ideas and egalitarian principles.”<sup>20</sup>

Rahel Varnhagen’s goal was not just to “have” a salon, or to exhibit an interest in literature, art and culture in general; her special endeavour was to understand the human being, to uncover the interests and authenticity of each personality. Many people testify to her talent and intuition for glimpsing the true soul of others. Karl Varnhagen von Ense confessed in his *Memoirs*:

None denied her extraordinary gifts; it was conceded that she was endowed with remarkable powers of mind, wit, and humour. [...] Few could understand her noble aspirations, her generous impulses, her sacred love of truth.<sup>21</sup>

Possessed of this generous nature, her house quickly became the cradle of anyone interested in cultivating the spirit. Old friends, such as Henriette Herz, Bettina von Arnim, Alexander von Humboldt, and Schleiermacher, all accompanied the Varnhagen family in this renewed project of a second salon. New members joined, all pursuing the same ideal under Rahel’s warm sociability. They included, among others: Hegel, Eduard Gans (Hegel’s student), Leopold Ranke, the young Karl Marx, Henrik Steffens, Henrich Heine. Thanks to these personalities, the Varnhagen household became the heart of a cultural life whose central focus was to spread intellectual values far beyond Berlin.<sup>22</sup>

The fame of this second salon did indeed spread throughout Germany. Like with the first salon, the second one consisted of a mixed society: it welcomed men and women, people of Christian and Jewish faith, old friends, but also many young people. Expanding the interests of the “newest generation” was a significant goal of this second salon. In this manner, Rahel herself not only had access to the latest ideas, but she sought to give valuable

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Duff Gordon (ed.), *Sketches of German Life and Scenes from the War of Liberation in Germany. Selected and translated from the Memoirs of Varnhagen von Ense* (London: John Murray, 1861), 52.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. E. Key, *Rahel Varnhagen. A Portrait*, 234.

guidance to the younger generation. And she managed to achieve this by means of her inspiring dialogues with the young members, learning in turn about the latest topics related to culture and science. For instance, she debated political issues with the young Karl Marx. As Bertha Meyer recounts:

She was constantly living in a world of ideas, all the big movements of the day were familiar to her, and in more than one instance it was in her salon that statesman, scientists and *littérateurs* met and openly discussed the trends of the time.<sup>23</sup>

After all the upheavals in society, and after everything that she herself had experienced as a Jewish woman, Rahel Varnhagen was more and more convinced that no true human relationship is possible without freedom. Freedom became the essence of any dialogue for her through which the communication could realize its objective as a means of attaining the ideals of humanity.

Undoubtedly, the disciplines of literature and philosophy formed the most crucial foundations in the development of her initial ideas with regard to the education of the human being, which sought to rise to the level of the ideas of Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Schleiermacher, or Wilhelm von Humboldt. These ideas were not merely restricted to the conversations of her salon but became reflected in her correspondence. The intellectual genius of this woman is embodied in more than ten thousand letters,<sup>24</sup> aphorisms, and a number of essays that she left to posterity. In 1812, Karl Varnhagen encouraged Rahel to publish, under the pseudonym “G”, an essay on Goethe. It was titled: *Über Goethe: Bruchstücke aus Briefen* (On Goethe: Fragments from Letters).<sup>25</sup> After Rahel’s death in 1834 her husband revealed her identity as the “author” of these letters. This was not the only piece of writing that Rahel published during her lifetime. Among others, in 1816 she published *Bruchstücke aus Briefe und Denkblättern* (Fragments from Letters and

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<sup>23</sup> B. Meyer, *Salon Sketches. Biographical Studies of Berlin Salons of the Emancipation*, 88.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *The Place to Be. Salons als Orte der Emanzipation/ Salons-Places of Emancipation* (Bilingual Edition), ed. Werner Hanak, Astrid Peterle and Danielle Spera (Viena: Jüdisches Museum Wien, 2018), 18. In Rahel’s time, writing letters was not only a social duty but also an art. Letters were considered as a supplement to the newspaper, and valued means of communication.

<sup>25</sup> In: *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, nos. 161, 162, 164, 169, 176 (6 July 1812–23 July 1812). Reprinted in: Rahel Varnhagen von Ense, *“Ich will noch leben wenn man’s liest.” Journalistische Beiträge aus den Jahren 1812-1829*, ed. Lieselotte Kinskofer (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 9–22. Cf. L. French, *German Women as Letters Writers (1750-1850)* (London: Associated University Press, 1996), 35.

Memorabilia) in Troxler's *Schweizerisches Museum*<sup>26</sup>; and in August 1821 she wrote an article on Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* that appeared in the *Der Gesellschafter*.<sup>27</sup> This essay provided the opportunity for Rahel to return to her earlier enthusiasm for Goethe, and to reflect further on several issues that particularly concerned her, especially the problems of morality and truth. Finally, in 1826 she published an essay "From the Papers of a Contemporary Woman", while in 1829 she penned the text entitled "From the Memoirs of a Berlin Woman."<sup>28</sup>

Rahel's ideas are particularly rooted in Enlightenment philosophy; but on account of her work, interest, and openness, her thought furthered expanded towards new horizons. From the intellectual point of view, all of these elements helped her to develop into one of the most emancipated women of the time. Georg Brandes declares:

She was one of those rare beings whose inexhaustible vigor and freshness of mind enabled her to understand everything and everyone, to sympathise with the most dissimilar individuals and tendencies, to penetrate to the core of things.<sup>29</sup>

This underscores the striking intelligence of Rahel Varnhagen that was highly appreciated, among others, by Schleiermacher, Friedrich Schlegel, and Schelling. After this brief overview of her life, education and writings, let us now examine in more detail her philosophical ideas relating to moral character, the ideal of *Bildung* or education, ethical community and sociability.

### 3. Moral Character and the Ideal of *Bildung*

Rahel Varnhagen's deepest concern was to understand the essence and character of the human being. In her letters, she raises questions about what it means to be human. She was convinced that the moral vocation of the human being is to come into the world in order to pose intelligent questions and then to actively but humbly await the answers. The source of all human error, therefore, is to refrain from asking these intelligent questions or to simply reply with flattering and self-deceptive answers.<sup>30</sup> In other words, Rahel was preoccupied with the problem of human vocation and destiny, about the duration of human life in this world, and how human beings may

<sup>26</sup> In: *Schweizerisches Museum* (1816): 212-242, 329-375.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. M. Daley, *Women Letters* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1998), 52-53.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>29</sup> G. Brandes, "Young Germany", 692.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. M. Hargrave, *Some German Women and Their Salons*, 145.

best cultivate their intellectual and spiritual growth. The primary focus of Rahel's critique was to strive for an equal society – as the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard would say – in which the majority of people should learn to raise these issues and no longer be content to continue living in terms of fawning replies and prejudices. As mentioned earlier, her main weapon was her own intelligence (demonstrated in both her writings and manner of life and being), but also a unique social sensitivity that not only concerned the problem of the Jewish people living in Prussia at that time, but extended to universal human problems.

Even though she openly confessed that “daily life is the subject matter of my art (writing),”<sup>31</sup> it must be noted that Rahel's letters are replete with innovative ideas reflecting the fact that her thinking was oriented toward the future. She constantly repeated that the present is the future and was fully aware that the world was continually moving forward. She exhibited a constant concern for how human beings need to make enormous efforts in order to educate their own character and consciously participate in their own destiny. She writes in a letter from December 1816:

Our destiny is really nothing more than our character; and our character but the result of our active and passive being, the sum, the combination of all our capacities and gifts. This is in its deepest sense oneself. [...] I am put into this life with all my faculties, and through them I feel after the deepest enjoyment of outward things, after intimate knowledge of existence, of the world – a world which is still given to me of God, just as time is also eternity and already a future.<sup>32</sup>

By participating in their destiny, human beings implicitly participate in the destiny of their community. Varnhagen endeavoured to convey to others the value of the education of moral character. Without an awareness of how vital this education is, it would be impossible to make decisions and to relate to one another, or to conceive of a truly ethical attitude towards life itself. Hence, the sole duty of the human being is to carry out the right course of action. Naturally, this leads to the question: what exactly does “carrying out the right course of action” mean? For Varnhagen, the answer is above all to “be faithful to yourself”; that is to say, this attitude involves a type of faithfulness to not betray one's own inner nature through lies, hypocrisy, or a false sense of duty; it signifies an ability to overcome all the deceit, erroneous and inauthentic images with which we envelop ourselves. On the other hand, loyalty to one's self is a quality that is only attained by cultivating

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<sup>31</sup> R. Varnhagen, GW 2:410-11.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. K. Vaughan Jennings, *Rahel: Her Life and Letters*, 180-181.

one's moral character. This is synonymous with what the Greeks called *ethos*, the highest ethical duty obtained through education, refinement, and the acquiring of wisdom.

Aristotle taught that character is the foundation of an ethical life. If ethics were merely a memorized set of norms, then a person's life would not only be devoid of meaning, but a mechanical repetition of acts without love. Rather, Greek thought instructs us that an ethical life commences with consciousness. If we are aware of the acts we carry out and our character becomes further developed in each single action, then we are called upon to learn and appreciate their true value. To be sure, Varnhagen did not carry out a systematic investigation of ethics, but through repeated readings of the classics in the history of philosophy, essentially Spinoza, Kant, and Schleiermacher, as well as the works of Goethe and Schiller, she came to the understanding that no ethical life is possible if it does not lead to real choices with regard to the inner transformation of our moral character. However, the question then becomes: how to transform oneself towards the highest good? This is an issue tackled by Schiller in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, a decisive work for Varnhagen. Schiller argues that every human being is animated by an ideal, and bears within himself or herself an ideal human being to whom they aspire. Our task is to strive and remain in harmony with this ideal, to elevate and beautify our spirit. This requires both moral beauty – which is reflected in our character – and aesthetic beauty – which is reflected in how a beautiful character or soul is able to create a work of art through freedom. This all depends on a particular life-style or manner of living, and it is only in this way that the temporal human being ennobles and approaches the inner *ideal* human being.<sup>33</sup>

This transformation of our inner moral character is connected in turn with our outer physical character and body – a topic and interrelationship keenly debated at the time. In his book *Becoming Human: Romantic Anthropology and the Embodiment of Freedom*, Chad Wellmon relates how in 1796 the German doctor Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland wrote to Kant about the art of prolonging human life.<sup>34</sup> Hufeland's patients included, among others, Goethe, Schiller and Herder. The letter to Kant was accompanied by a copy of Hufeland's latest book *The Art of Prolonging Life (Die Kunst das menschliche Leben zu verlängern)* in which he argued that health is the main life

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. F. Schiller, *Kallias. Cartas sobre la educación estética del hombre* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Hufeland to Kant, Letter 1728 (AA, 12-136), cited in C. Wellmon, *Becoming Human. Romantic Anthropology and the Embodiment of Freedom* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 49.

force of human beings, and that disease does not exist to be cured, but should be prevented by a specific diet – from the Greek *δαιτα*, ‘way of living’ – which refers to a strict regime and certain behavioural practices. In Hufeland’s sense, therefore, the goal of medicine is not only to extend life, but to establish a particular lifestyle in the patient, to cultivate both the medical and ethical health of the human being.<sup>35</sup>

In this same letter, Hufeland asks Kant for his own opinion on this matter. Hufeland considered that moral culture was indispensable for the ethical and physical perfection of the human being. In reply, Kant not only expressed an admiration for Hufeland’s work, but wrote an essay referring to the idea of the power of the mind over the diseased bodily sensations, laying the foundations for his own theory of “dietetics”. Acknowledging the Greek etymology of dietetics as a “way of living”, both Kant and Hufeland maintained that the proper relationship between the mind and body is not simply given but must be cultivated and developed. For Kant, this is the practice of philosophy as *dietetics* (just as was for the stoics);<sup>36</sup> it is the relationship between reason and feeling, and cultivating the power of reason over the inner feelings or the body.<sup>37</sup> I would argue that dietetics represents the starting point in the attempt to understand the human being as a relational or dialogical being. For the Greeks, dietetics was *paideia*, it was a way to cultivate virtue and restore the health of the soul and body. This practice of *arête* or virtue represented the foundation for a healthy “manner of living” in an ethical and physical sense.

As mentioned, according to Aristotle, character must be morally educated. Intelligence needs to be translated into the development of a skill or practice resulting in virtue; i.e. to be good means to practice goodness, or to be honest means to carry out honesty in practice. A person with character has the ability to keep their passions in check, for the passions represent the extremes of any action, as Aristotle points out in his *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>38</sup> Rahel, on the contrary, was a passionate woman, and her dietetics revealed her inner nature. To have character for her meant the embodiment of a certain form of inner moral courage, since this develops our mind and sets our other abilities in motion towards their goal.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, 49.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. I. Kant, *Anthropology, History and Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Hufeland to Kant, Letter 1728 (AA, 12-136), cited in: C. Wellmon, *Becoming Human. Romantic Anthropology and the Embodiment of Freedom*, 50.

<sup>38</sup> Cf., Aristóteles, *Ética Nicomaquea* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 1983).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. E. Key, *Rahel Varnhagen. A Portrait*, p. 68.



In this regard, it could be said that Rahel's entire life and worldview were devoted to and founded on the ideal of *Bildung*.<sup>40</sup> For her, it is impossible to cultivate one's ethical or moral character, or to create a genuine social community, without *Bildung* or education. For her, the ideal of cultivating a "beautiful soul" implied a virtuous character, a harmonious beauty attained by character-development (*Charakter-Bildung*), a central idea in the German Enlightenment and romanticism, and related to the ideal of "*Kultur*"<sup>41</sup> in the Weimar classicism of Herder, Goethe and Schiller.<sup>42</sup> As W. H. Bruford has remarked, this ideal concerns the individual's debt to the civilization into which they are born, a moral duty to further develop their mind and personality.<sup>43</sup>

This idea of self-education or cultivation of the spirit was not confined to any particular social status or rank. Hence, genuine *Bildung* was understood as a sign of nobility, but a spiritual form of nobility, achieved through education and culture, the development of a new class of citizens known as the *intelligentsia*. Although in German culture the idea of *Bildung* is especially related to Goethe, Schiller, Herder, and Fichte, and with romantics like Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich Schleiermacher, the concept was already familiar to Kant, who spoke of the cultivation of the talents and faculties, and of course, its origins are much older.<sup>44</sup> Starting from the root of the word culture that Cicero expressed as "cultura animi", and which arises from a rebirth of the Greek *paideia*. The original Greek concept of virtue and excellence was elevated and transformed by the German thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into the concept of *Bildung*, the ideal state of humanity that all human beings should pursue.

Indeed, Herder is one of the first thinkers to advocate that self-transformation and development is necessary for the progress of humanity.<sup>45</sup> He even identifies *Bildung* with philosophy itself, and the harmonious

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<sup>40</sup> Michel Fabre notes, the concept of *Bildung* has its roots "in medieval mysticism according to which the human being carries in his soul the image (*Bild*) of God, from which he was created, and to which he must develop," M. Fabre, "Experiencia y formación: la *Bildung*," *Revista Educación y Pedagogía*, vol. 23, no. 59 (Colombia: Universidad de Antioquia, 2011), 215.

<sup>41</sup> The existence of *salons* promoted a new type of education in German culture.

<sup>42</sup> In Germany of the eighteenth century there was a unanimous desire to construct a civilization on the basis of the concept of culture, on the personal cultivation of the spirit, a culture not merely retained in the private inner memories of a person, but reflected in the outer actions of each human being.

<sup>43</sup> W.H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation. Bildung from Humboldt to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 71.

<sup>44</sup> See footnote 40 above.

<sup>45</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder's *Outline of Philosophy of the History of Humanity* (1784-1791) helped shape Varnhagen's worldview. Cf. Tewarson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen*, 211.

development of the character, faculties, and capabilities of the human spirit.<sup>46</sup> One of the most well-known cultural manifestations of the time was the *Bildungsroman* – the so-called novel of education or development. Thus, Goethe, Novalis, Hölderlin, Schiller, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Scheleirmacher, or Friedrich Schlegel, all championed *Bildung*, because as Schlegel proclaimed: “it was the supreme good and the one thing that was needed.”<sup>47</sup>

Laura Deiulio has underscored that with genuine *Bildung*, each human being is able to develop their own identity, and actively create an exemplary ethical image in which humanity attains this quality as the sum total of beauty and goodness. This was especially true for the women writers of philosophical romanticism like Rahel Varnhagen:

As opposed to a more narrowly defined formal education or career training, *Bildung* encompassed a developing identity that learners cultivated by means of the intellectual experiences they encountered throughout their lives. This broader, humanistic definition suggests that, although they were denied access to formal university education, women of the Romantic period, at least in theory, could be active producers and developers of *Bildung*.<sup>48</sup>

A person with a cultivated character or *Bildung* not only acts to accomplish their moral obligations but will actively perfect and transform the moral standards with their own ethical life and manner of living. Here Rahel Varnhagen affirms:

An educated person is not one whom nature has treated lavishly; and educated person is one who uses the talents he has kindly, wisely, and properly and for the highest purpose...who can look firmly at where he is lacking, and realize what he is lacking. In my mind this is a duty and not a gift; and constitutes for me solely an educated human being.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. J.G. Herder, *Ideas para la filosofía de la historia de la humanidad* (Madrid: Gredos, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> F. Schlegel, *Ideas* (España: Pretextos, 2011), 93.

<sup>48</sup> Deiulo continues: “In this essay, I shall test this hypothesis by looking closely at one set of letters written by Rahel Levin Varnhagen and her most important friend, Pauline Wiesel ... In the atmosphere of renewed interest in women writers that has developed in the late twentieth century, Rahel Levin Varnhagen has emerged as one of the key figures of German romanticism.” See Laura Deiulio, “The Voice of the *schöne Seele*: Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Pauline Wiesel as Readers of German Classicism” in: *Challenging Separate Spheres. Female Bildung in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Germany*, ed. E. Marjanne E. Goozè, North America Studies in 19th-Century German Literature, vol. 40 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 94-95.

<sup>49</sup> R. Varnhagen, GW 3:35.

Self-education or *Bildung* furthermore helps the human being to recognize the difference between *capacities* (talent/vocation) and *incapacities* or an absence of talent. In this respect Rahel was fully aware of her own limitations. In her letters, she rhetorically asks: “I thus have talent. Should I exercise it? And earn something? Ah, God! I know myself too well.”<sup>50</sup> She was likewise aware that some human beings even possessed genius; but as she recalled, genius is an exception. For a person with a cultivated character and devoted to *Bildung*, ethics “cannot be reduced to a mechanical application of principles,”<sup>51</sup> but ethics must have “style”, in the sense of having quality. A plentiful life from an ethical point of view is the capacity of the human being to assume and live in the present; the awareness and ability to live completely in our surroundings. In a letter to her husband Karl Varnhagen, Rahel writes: “Our future happiness will consist in our interest in learning something new at every moment.”<sup>52</sup> A person who is not occupied with the ennoblement of their character, both ethically and aesthetically, in which beauty and freedom are reflected, is unable to forge a moral link with their own community in which genuine sociability may be cultivated. In the romantic sense, each human being is therefore like an artist: “Human beings are a work of art that is given to ourselves as a task. The material, the artist, and the work itself, are all contained within ourselves.”<sup>53</sup>

#### 4. Ethical Community and Sociability

According to Varnhagen, an ethical and social community is impossible without the opening of one person toward another, an opening that depends on how much this person is able to “give himself” to the other and therefore establish an authentic human bond. The moral character of a person is revealed in the manner in which they act in relation to their surroundings.

Rahel is the promoter of a kind of dialogical philosophy that Martin Buber later considered as the basis of what he would call “the philosophy of realization.”<sup>54</sup> For her, as well as for Buber and Emmanuel Levinas, an

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<sup>50</sup> R. Varnhagen, *Briefe an eine Freundin: Rahel Varnhagen an Rebecca Friedländer*, ed. Deborah Hertz (Cologne: Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 1988) (Cited as: *Briefe an eine Freundin*), 155.

<sup>51</sup> Hufeland to Kant, Letter 1728 (AA, 12-136) cited in: C. Wellmon, *Becoming Human*, 3.

<sup>52</sup> R. Varnhagen, GW 3:581.

<sup>53</sup> R. Varnhagen, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Friedhelm Kemp (Munich: Winkler, 1983), Vols 1-4, (Cited as *Briefwechsel* 1:340).

<sup>54</sup> As far as I am aware, Rahel Varnhagen’s writings are not cited in Martin Buber’s work. When reading Varnhagen’s philosophical reflections on community, sociability or dialogue, it is impossible not to recall Buber’s own reflections on dialogue and community. It is possible he learned of her work in Hannah Arendt’s text, *Rahel Varnhagen. Lebensgeschichte*

ethical life is only possible when we are *face to face* with other people. Ethics truly begins when we have the other person before us. In Buber's eyes, the realization of oneself begins in this *encounter*; or, as Levinas would say, only being "outside the subject", outside of oneself, can a human being be the witness of the blossoming of their own character before the other person. It is an invitation for ethical renewal, and this ethical life is achieved before the presence of the human face. Presence means relation; it is the period of a genuine encounter with the world, where moral life naturally emerges from the human being and is contrary to an imposed rule.

Rahel Varnhagen's friendship is embodied and expressed in countless letters, and her sociability and dialogical relations with others represent the foundations for carrying out a meaningful and ethical manner of living. The concept and term "sociability" has its root in *societas*, a word signifying "company". From this perspective, a life that is not accompanied, i.e. a life that is not the realization of the self in the company of others is not a fully lived human life. Varnhagen writes:

Sociability. Actually, that which is most human among human beings! The essence and the point of departure of all that is moral! Without companions, without comrades during this earthly existence, we would ourselves not be persons and any ethical action, law, or thought [would be] impossible: impossible, without the premise that to another – the image of a person – is the same as to us, that he is what we are. Therefore, whoever ruins sociability, harms it, harms me, whoever damages it, damages me: my innermost self.<sup>55</sup>

Subsequently, sociability for Rahel is one of the most foundational aspects of human existence. Its acquisition implies searching for freedom, love, and mutually acknowledging the autonomy and wellbeing of others. The human being is a social being, yet we do not need to forfeit the personal sphere. When a person attains genuine sociability with others they simultaneously achieve the realization of themselves as a human being.

Notwithstanding, Rahel could also express supreme disappointment when seeing how certain human beings preferred falsehood over active cognitive efforts to try and create social bonds and live from the perspective of authenticity. On this point, she writes in a letter dated 23 March 1812:

To understand people thoroughly is an absolute and urgent necessity, which, however, is often hindered by a few trivial circumstances. From

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*einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik* (Rahel Varnhagen. *The Life of a Jewess*), her *Habilitation* dissertation written in 1929, but published much later.

<sup>55</sup> R. Varnhagen, GW 2:616; English cited in: H.T. Tewarson, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen*, 43.

a variety of small conflicting purposes people become false, or else are stupid, and lack altogether the fine mental perception essential to the contact of mind with mind.<sup>56</sup>

Varnhagen endeavoured to put into practice a form of authentic sociability. Since sociability is a fundamental principle that defines human existence and action it is of intrinsic value of the community. There is no community without sociability. Human beings require this relation to one another because living in isolation would denote the negation of life. In the twentieth century, it was Levinas who characterized sociability as the essence of an ethical life, as a person's ability to exist and live with others, while Buber likewise understood sociability as an interpersonal relationship placing us before the other. A total openness is required in order to be authentically beside the other, to be in front of the other, and to understand the intrinsic needs of a person seeking to attain their own self-realization. For Rahel Varnhagen, a person is capable of recognizing their own image in another person, encapsulated in her saying: "the other is me." This act of recognizing the other allows us to understand our proximity to them. By ignoring their presence, or harbouring an unwillingness to embrace their presence with openness, we renounce any claim to moral community. The highest morality can only exist and flourish if has its roots in the highest freedom. Rahel's salons were full of extraordinarily different people, who ultimately became aware of the value of such a community for their own intellectual and social growth.

From Spinoza, Rahel learned the moral sense of free will, the person and community, which implies the ability to develop our potential; for freedom furthers the building of our character when putting ourselves face to face with others in a meaningful existence. She writes in a letter to a friend:

The highest morality can only come through the highest freedom. To be free can only mean to be permitted slavishly to follow one's inmost nature. [...] The possession of freedom is merely the possession of that which is necessary for us, in order that we may be that which we really ought to have.<sup>57</sup>

The importance that Rahel attributed to the idea of an ethical community, was not only gained from her experiences of the Berlin salons, but also from the reflections of her close friend, the philosopher and theologian Friedrich

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. J. Vaghan, *Rahel: Her Life and Letters*, 106.

<sup>57</sup> Cited in: B. Meyer, *Salon Sketches. Biographical Studies of Berlin Salons of the Emancipation*, 113.

Schleiermacher. This relation speaks volumes about her actual philosophical approach. In his *Soliloquies (Monologen)*, Schleiermacher was one of the first philosophers to explore the potential of the idea of an ethical community, presenting the idea of community as a mirror in which the human being is reflected. For community to be possible, human beings must create it and develop their spirit through free will. Both for Schleiermacher and Rahel Varnhagen, it is therefore impossible to speak of the creation of a community without the action and direct involvement of the human being. Each action that is carried out is not meant to satisfy one's own immediate desire but to create a likeminded community. Again, it is not a question of renouncing our individuality, because individuality can only be fully realized in this relational, dialogical and reciprocal manner of being with others.

In his *Essay on a Theory of Social Behaviour* – later incorporated into his *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics* – Schleiermacher argues that the realization of the person in the community is the highest ethical principle. Unlike Kant, this does not represent a duty, since for the romantic philosopher the conditions of ethical realization are not duties, but intelligence, character, love and sociability. He writes:

Community does not feature in any active way in the doctrine of duties; only the individual becomes community when he comes into being [...]. Anyone who enters a universal community without bringing his whole individuality with him, does not actually enter himself, so that entering into [community] and existence within it are only possible [when accompanied by] love.<sup>58</sup>

In 1799 Schleiermacher began to develop this *theory of sociability (Geselligkeit)*, emphasizing that to carry out this virtue there are no limits to religion, gender or social position. As we have seen, in order for sociability to be possible, interaction with the other is absolutely necessary, because our individuality is only properly and reciprocally developed in this way. Accordingly, sociability actually has nothing to do with “being social”, as Frederick C. Beiser has remarked, criticizing the tradition of the social contract (Hobbes and Rousseau).<sup>59</sup> Nor is sociability a “social agreement”; it has nothing to do with the public (political) sphere and its relation with the private sphere. On the contrary, as Schleiermacher explains, there is an inherent desire in our

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<sup>58</sup> F. Schleiermacher, *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 123, 129.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Frederick C. Beiser, “Schleiermacher’s Ethics” in: *Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, edited by Jaqueline Mariña (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 53.

nature to relate to others and be recognized by them. Thus, in order to achieve sociability we must be able to overcome the restrictions of selfishness, comfort, leaving the private sphere to encounter other people, and to transmit our knowledge and establish links with them. At base, it is a kind of versatility, the ability to adapt to any situation, to any type of topic, without losing one's identity. As William Rash states, sociability for Schleiermacher can be summarized as follows: "he who knows how to adapt and knows how to express his own uniqueness in varied ways."<sup>60</sup> For the German philosopher Schleiermacher, sociability is therefore the virtue through which an ethical community becomes possible without being determined by external purposes, selfishness, or the moral law, and it represents one of the most primary and noble needs of human beings. Although it is characterized as a free interaction between people, sociability is not just passively given to everybody. It requires effort to cultivate one's character in order to carry it out, and hence ethics begins when we face each other, or in Schleiermacher's words: "where the one is, there is the limit of the other."<sup>61</sup> He was convinced that any human being, when encountering the other, is forced to go beyond their own self-limitations. This implies a responsibility that helps us realize ourselves within our own existence: "Thus each one would find life in the others, and would become what is fully within their possibilities."<sup>62</sup>

Consequently, among all the philosophers, I would argue that Schleiermacher had the greatest impact on Rahel Varnhagen's thought. She quickly assimilated Schleiermacher's theoretical ideas, and put them into practice in her Berlin salons, where openness and heart-to-heart encounters with the other, dialogue and sociability were all essential, promoting a community life that made demands on the personal involvement of its members. For her, the relationship between human beings should be like the extension of one's arm: "the other should be my extension, my continuation."<sup>63</sup> Her starting point is a questioning of morality itself, she believes in the idea of an elevated life as *dynamis*, a life where there is movement, freedom, and the idea of responsibility, which become translated

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<sup>60</sup> W. Rasch, "Ideal Sociability. Friedrich Schleiermacher and the Ambivalence of Extrasocial Space" in *Gender in Transition. Discourse and Practice in German-Speaking Europe 1750-1830*, edited by Ulrike Gleixner and Marion W. Gray (University of Michigan, 2006), 330.

<sup>61</sup> F. Schleiermacher, *Monólogos* (Barcelona: Ed. Anthropos, 1991), 87, frag. 86. Spanish edition (my translation).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 81 (Frag. 80).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. J. Vaghan, *Rahel: Her Life and Letters*, 108.

as the development of the spirit to attain humanity. She declares moral war as it were on the “established order” of her time:

the need of morality continues, but also that the conceptions of morality cannot remain unaltered. [...] The present age is sick with such old imaginings [...] All existence is progressive, gains unceasingly in intensive vision; in this way earthly life is raised and that life which falls outside its bounds. The more insight we obtain, the more we shall come into harmony with life itself. [...] Life is not a dead repetition but a development to insight and through insight.<sup>64</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Rahel Varnhagen was not only one of the most brilliant women of her time, whose genius expressed itself in her manner of writing and in her personality, but she was also the singular manifestation of a special era in European cultural history. In this sense, Georg Brandes has rightly remarked: “Rahel is the first modern woman of German culture.”<sup>65</sup> Throughout her life she wrote countless letters, contributing to the development of the epistolary genre by sharing her ideas and experiences with close friends. These letters undoubtedly highlight the brilliance of her thought, not to mention her strong personality and character, which led Goethe himself to admiringly call her “a true woman.”

Nevertheless, as both a thinker and woman Rahel struggled her entire life to find her place in society. She did not adhere to the rules and chose to live freely. The fact that she remained unmarried until 43 years of age illustrates her non-conformity. For this reason, a number of historians see her as a feminist role model.<sup>66</sup> She sought to express her personality in essays and letters that can be revelatory for the reader, strongly believing that a collection of letters could be more instructive about a particular era, life, or mode of thought, than the writings of a famous historian.

Was she a visionary? It is hard to say, but in any event, she learned from some of the most important thinkers of her time, and transformed this knowledge into a specific manner of living or *Weltanschauung*. As Laura DeJulio notes, the way in which Rahel Varnhagen perceived “otherness” makes her a particularly rich source for a study of *Bildung* in German

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<sup>64</sup> Cited in: E. Key, *Rahel Varnhagen. A Portrait*, 49-50.

<sup>65</sup> G. Brandes, “Young Germany”, 692.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Werner Hanak, Astrid Peterle and Danielle Spera (eds.), *The Place to Be. Salons als Orte der Emanzipation*, 19.



Romanticism.<sup>67</sup> Although the idea of presenting Rahel's philosophical reflections and contributions, might seem exaggerated to some, I consider her reflections and unique combination of ideas – such as those on education, moral character, the progress of humanity, ethical community life, and sociability – as anticipations of concepts that will later be developed by many celebrated philosophers.

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. L. Deiulio, "The Voice of the *schöne Seele*: Rahel Levin Varnhagen and Pauline Wiesel as Readers of German Classicism", 94-95.



# Symphilosophie

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## Geschlecht, Sinnfeld, Kontingenz

### Zur Ontologie in Dorothea Schlegels *Florentin*

*Bryan Norton*\*

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel setzt sich mit der Beziehung zwischen Ontologie, Kontingenz und Geschlecht in der Frühromantik auseinander und legt den Fokus dabei auf die Figur von Dorothea Schlegel. Obwohl Dorothea Schlegels Werk oft getrennt von den theoretischen Zielen der Frühromantik behandelt wird, argumentiere ich für die Zentralität ihres Romans *Florentin* im nachkantischen Kontext. *Florentin* bietet eine wichtige Revision von Friedrich Schlegels Poetik und Metaphysik der Ehe an, sowie der geschlechtsspezifischen Dynamik seiner Idee einer romantischen Symphilosophie. Darüber hinaus lässt sich der Roman als eine Inszenierung grundlegender Aspekte der realistischen Ontologie Markus Gabriels lesen, die angesichts von Beisers Plädoyer für eine nichtsubjektive Ansicht auf die transzendentalen Ziele der Romantiker für die Romantikforschung in Anspruch genommen werden kann. In Kontrast zu Gabriels Sinnfeld-ontologie, die Ontologie in letzter Instanz von Geist abhängig macht, insistiert Dorothea Schlegels *Florentin* allerdings auf die irreduzible Präsenz der Körper und körperlicher Kontingenzen.

*Stichwörter:* Dorothea Schlegel, Markus Gabriel, Sinnfeldontologie, Kontingenz, Frühromantik

#### ABSTRACT

This article investigates the relationship between ontology, contingency and gender in early Romanticism, focusing on the figure of Dorothea Schlegel. Although Dorothea Schlegel's work is often treated at a remove from the theoretical goals of early Romanticism, I argue for the centrality of her novel *Florentin* in a post-Kantian context. *Florentin* offers an important revision of Friedrich Schlegel's poetics and metaphysics of marriage, as well as the gendered dynamics underlying his idea of a romantic *Symphilosophie*. The novel can also be read as a staging of fundamental aspects of Markus Gabriel's realist ontology, which can be claimed for romanticism research in light of Beiser's plea for a non-subjective view of the Romantics' transcendental aims. In contrast to Gabriel's sense field ontology, however, which makes ontology ultimately dependent on spirit, Dorothea Schlegel's *Florentin* insists on the irreducible presence of bodies and corporal contingencies.

*Keywords:* Dorothea Schlegel, Markus Gabriel, sense field ontology, contingency, Early German Romanticism

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\* Doctoral Candidate in Comparative Literature and Literary Theory, University of Pennsylvania, USA; Guest Researcher, Institut für deutsche Literatur, Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Unter den Linden 6, 10117 Berlin, Germany – bryann@sas.upenn.edu

## Einleitung<sup>1</sup>

Die Entwicklung der deutschen Philosophie nach Kant ist in den letzten Jahren als die Bewegung von einer untergeordneten Auffassung von Kontingenz in Kants kritischer Philosophie zu einer Kontingenz zweiter Ordnung— d.h. die Kontingenz der Kontingenz selber—im nachkantischen Idealismus beschrieben worden.<sup>2</sup> Statt nur systemintern und unter vorgegebenen strukturellen Bedingungen zu wirken, wie Kant in den Antinomien der reinen Vernunft zu erklären versucht hatte, erhält Kontingenz im nachkantischen Idealismus den höchsten ontologischen Rang.<sup>3</sup> Diese Art Kontingenz zweiter Ordnung dehnt sich weit über die Grenzen des kantischen Subjekts hinaus und eröffnet laut Markus Gabriel den Weg zu einer neuen realistischen Ontologie, die weder szientistisch-reduktiv noch konstruktivistisch sein soll.<sup>4</sup> Diese Ontologie, die als Sinnfeldontologie im Kontext von Debatten zum neuen Realismus und zu objektorientierter Ontologie ihren Namen erhalten hat, soll nicht mehr auf einem veralteten

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<sup>1</sup> Diese Auseinandersetzung mit Dorothea Schlegel wurde zuerst im Rahmen der Goethe Ringvorlesungen an der Goethe Universität in Frankfurt am Main vorgestellt. Ich bedanke mich herzlich bei Martina Wrenli für die Möglichkeit, meine lückenhaften Ergebnisse im Sommer 2020 vortragen zu dürfen, sowie bei Catriona Macleod, Warren Breckman und Frederike Middelhof für ihren Kommentar zu verschiedenen Versionen dieses Aufsatzes. Nicht zuletzt bedanke ich mich bei der Redaktion von *Symphilosophie* für die sorgfältigen Rückmeldungen und für die Ermutigung zur Einreichung dieses Beitrages. Dieser Aufsatz enthält meine ersten Überlegungen zu diesem komplexen Thema.

<sup>2</sup> Diese Auseinandersetzung mit Kontingenz in der Zeit nach Kant stammt teilweise aus Markus Gabriels Kritik der in Quentin Meillassoux's *Après la finitude* aufgestellten Idee einer Notwendigkeit der Kontingenz für die Ontologie. Gabriels vorgeschlagene Kontingenz zweiter Ordnung wurde im Laufe des letzten Jahrzehnts mehrmals im Rahmen weiterer Studien zum nachkantischen Idealismus besprochen. Vgl. „The Mythological Being of Reflection“ in Markus Gabriel und Slavoj Žižek, *Mythology, Madness, and Laughter: Subjectivity in German Idealism*, New York/London 2009, 15-94. Die ausführlichste Untersuchung dieser Thematik im nachkantischen Kontext bietet *Transcendental Ontology*, obwohl weitere Beschäftigungen auch in Schriften wie *Sinn und Existenz* zu finden sind. Vgl. *Transcendental Ontology: Essays in German Idealism*, New York/London 2011, insbesondere das 3. Kapitel zu Kontingenz bei Schelling und Hegel sowie Kapitel 7 und 10 in *Sinn und Existenz: Eine realistische Ontologie*, Berlin 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Während Kant Kontingenz aus systematischen Gründen erlauben muss (das gilt vor allem in der dritten und vierten Antinomie der reinen Vernunft) vollzieht er laut Gabriel den Wechsel zu einer neuen Art der Urteilskraft, die regulativ und reflektierend sein soll, um diese Kontingenz zu verharmlosen. Vgl. *KrV* A 533: B 561 – A 570: B 599. Diese Urteile sind Spezies-bedingt sowie von euklidischen Naturerfahrungen abhängig. Vgl. Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 40 und John McDowell, *Having the World in View: Essays on Kant, Hegel and Sellars*, Cambridge (MA) 2009, 78. Zu Kants Erfindung einer reflektierenden, regulativen Urteilskraft siehe Paul Guyers Aufsatz „Kants Principles of Reflecting Judgment“ in Guyer (Hg.), *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays*, Lanham 2003, 1-62.

<sup>4</sup> Vgl. *Transcendental Ontology*, xiv-xv.

Dualismus von Sein und Schein basieren.<sup>5</sup> Stattdessen erhalten metaphysische Betrachtungen über die Wirklichkeit und Möglichkeit von Objekten nur beschränkte Gültigkeit innerhalb eines bestimmten Sinnfeldes und sind nicht mehr in der Lage, einen ausschließenden Anspruch auf Erkenntnis zu erheben.<sup>6</sup> Metaphysik sowie die Naturwissenschaften stellen nur einzelne Möglichkeiten unter anderen dar, eins und dasselbe Objekt zu betrachten. Erkenntnis kann gleichfalls mittels Ästhetik oder anderer Umgangsarten mit einem Gegenstand gewonnen werden. Diese Ansicht spielt eine entscheidende Rolle in dem, was man die Unhintergebarkeit der Mythologie und Fiktion für die Philosophie insgesamt nennen könnte.<sup>7</sup>

### 1. Sinnfeldontologie und Frühromantik

Während Arbeiten zur jüngsten Sinnfeldontologie nur wenige direkte (und meistens beiläufige) Verweise auf die bestehende Forschung zur Frühromantik enthalten, gibt es überzeugende Gründe, Sinnfeldontologie in Beziehung zu Romantik und Romantikforschung zu setzen.<sup>8</sup> Vor allem lässt sich die Artikulation einer Kontingenz der Kontingenz im nachkantischen Idealismus mit Blick auf die Romantik als weiterer Versuch verstehen, die kantische Grenzlinie zwischen transzendentalen und empirischen Erfahrungsbereichen zu überwinden.<sup>9</sup> Diese ersehnte Überbrückung ist laut Manfred Frank das höchste Desideratum des frühromantischen Projekts. Sie deutet daraufhin, dass die ästhetischen und poetischen Leistungen der

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<sup>5</sup> Obwohl ich mich in diesem Artikel fast ausschließlich mit den sinnfeld-ontologischen Schriften von Markus Gabriel befasse, ist es hier wichtig zu bemerken, dass es auch andere Versionen dieses Programms gibt, die in den letzten Jahren entstanden sind, vor allem von Jocelyn Benoist in Frankreich. Vgl. Jocelyn Benoist, *Sens et sensibilité. L'intentionnalité en contexte*, Paris 2009 und Jocelyn Benoist, *L'adresse du réel*, Paris 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Vgl. das Kapitel zu „Wirklichkeit und Möglichkeit“ in Gabriel, *Sinn und Existenz*, 369-391.

<sup>7</sup> Diese Unhintergebarkeit wurde vor kurzem in Gabriels *Fiktionen* untersucht, obwohl sie auch zu seiner früheren Auseinandersetzung mit Schellings Spätphilosophie in *Der Mensch im Mythos* hindeutet. Vgl. Markus Gabriel, *Fiktionen*, Berlin 2020 und *Der Mensch im Mythos: Untersuchungen über Ontotheologie, Anthropologie und Selbstbewußt-seinsgeschichte in Schellings ‚Philosophie der Mythologie‘*, Berlin/New York 2006. Letzteres weist weiterhin auf einen Topos, der schon in der Romantik reflektiert wurde, vor allem in Friedrich Schlegels Plädoyer für eine neue „aus der innersten Tiefe des Geistes“ herausgearbeiteten Mythologie für die Neuzeit, die der Poetik sowie der Physik einen frischen Impuls geben würde. Vgl. die „Rede über die Mythologie“ in seinem *Gespräch über die Poesie*, Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel Ausgabe [KFSa], Erste Abteilung (I) Band 2, München, Paderborn, Wien, Zürich 1967, 311-329.

<sup>8</sup> Vgl. die kurzen Erwähnungen zu Hölderlin in „The Mythological Being of Reflection“, 47 und *Fiktionen*, 626.

<sup>9</sup> Der Begriff einer kantischen Grenzlinie stammt aus einem Brief Hölderlins und wird unten im zweiten Teil weiter diskutiert. Vgl. die 9. Vorlesung in Manfred Franks *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik: Vorlesungen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1989, 137-154.

Frühromantik entscheidend für metaphysische, epistemologische sowie ontologische Fragen im nachkantischen Kontext waren.<sup>10</sup> Während Beurteilungen dieser Versuche oft dekonstruktiv motiviert sind und romantische Schriften als Inszenierungen eines tiefergreifenden metaphysischen Versagens betrachten, gibt es noch andere Argumente, warum frühromantische Ansprüche auf Wissen als Entwicklung einer positiven Philosophie ernst zu nehmen sind.<sup>11</sup> Dieser Aspekt des frühromantischen Projekts ist vor allem von Frederick Beiser hervorgehoben worden, dessen Auseinandersetzung mit dem idealistischen *Kampf gegen Subjektivismus* in gewisser Hinsicht als Vorgänger von Gabriels Idealismus-Studien gelten kann. Wie Beiser es in seinem Buch *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism* schreibt: „The post-Kantian idealists understood the absolute in transcendental terms as the fundamental condition of the possibility of experience; as such, they refused to define it as either subjective or objective“.<sup>12</sup> In seiner Auseinandersetzung mit dem Deutschen Idealismus und dessen Entwicklung einer Kontingenz zweiter Ordnung behauptet Gabriel seinerseits folgendes: „The absolute is not opposed to knowledge as an unattainable beyond, but identified as the very process of a subjectivization of being in the form of finite objective knowledge.“<sup>13</sup>

Darüber hinaus wird in Schriften zur Sinnfeldontologie die Frage nach dem, was anders sein könnte (um die klassische aristotelische Definition von Kontingenz aufzurufen), unwiderruflich mit Fragen von Geschlecht und der Metaphysik sexueller Identitäten verbunden, was die Kernthematik dieses Artikels ausmacht.<sup>14</sup> In Gabriels Schriften zur Sinnfeldontologie wird mehrmals die Frage gestellt, ob sexuelle Identitäten nur als metaphysische Erwägungen innerhalb eines bestimmten Sinnfelds gültig sind, oder ob sie auf einem ontologischen Niveau—d.h. mit roher Kontingenz—wirken. Es entsteht in seinen Schriften wie *Fields of Sense* und *Sinn und Existenz* eine

<sup>10</sup> Vgl. Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik*, 139.

<sup>11</sup> Kanonisch für diese dekonstruktivistische Leseart ist die von Lacoue-Labarthe und Nancy eingeführte Idee eines *désœuvrement* des Metaphysischen im frühromantischen ästhetischen Programm. Dieses *désœuvrement* oder ‚Entarbeitung‘ wirkt durch die formalen Erfindungen der Romantik (vor allem durch das Fragment) und zielt auf die Unterbindung von Ansprüchen auf Vollkommenheit und metaphysische Schließung. Vgl. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe und Jean-Luc Nancy, *L’Absolu littéraire. Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand*, Paris 1978. Vgl. auch David Farrell Krell, *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God*, Bloomington 2005 und Alice A. Kuzniar, *Delayed Endings: Nonclosure in Novalis and Hölderlin*, Athens (Georgia) 1987.

<sup>12</sup> Vgl. die Einleitung zu Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1781-1801*, Cambridge (MA) 2002, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Vgl. Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Vgl. Kapitel 12 und 13 in Aristoteles, *Hermeneutik / Peri hermeneias*, Berlin 2015, 247-273.

rätselhafte und oft unbeantwortete Frage, ob sexuelle Identitäten nur als Wirklichkeiten bzw. Möglichkeiten zu verstehen sind—das heißt, als eine Metaphysik der vorstrukturierten Objekte innerhalb eines bedingten Sinnfelds—oder ob sie auf ein höheres ontologisches Niveau, das von einer unbestimmten Vielzahl von Kontingenzen geprägt sein könnte, hinausdeutet. In *Sinn und Existenz* scheint das Geschlecht nur metaphysisch zu wirken: „Wir verfügen schlichtweg nicht über *metaphysisch* notwendige Identitätskriterien für Gegenstände im Allgemeinen, weil es solche nicht gibt“. In *Fields of Sense* bleibt es hingegen unklar, ob Sex auch kontingent sein soll:

For something to exist is not for it to fall under any concept whatsoever, but to fall under suitable concepts. It is not enough to identify some bare individual essence of Arnold Schwarzenegger picked out by Kripkean baptism (that is, the moment someone referred to the guy for the first time) and to say that ‘Arnold Schwarzenegger’ from now on refers to the same individual in all possible worlds in which this individual exists. This might be a way of rephrasing the modal claims involved in saying that Arnold Schwarzenegger could have lost the Election [for Governor of California – B.N.] (too bad, he won) or that he could have not been the actor who played the Terminator (fortunately, he was chosen). But no one wants to say that Arnold Schwarzenegger (the guy) could have been a Norwegian female sex worker (he could not!), even though there is some possible world in which the individual essence of Arnold Schwarzenegger (whatever that is) could be a Norwegian female sex worker (maybe by having changed sex first depending on what the actual relationship between his individual essence, his genetic code, and his gender is).<sup>15</sup>

Wenn Markus Gabriel über die Bestimmtheit bzw. Flexibilität von Identität nach einer theoretischen Geschlechtsumwandlung spekuliert, tritt die Zentralität dieser Fragestellung ans Licht. Wenn eine Beziehung zwischen Wirklichkeit und Möglichkeit für diese sexuellen Identitäten kontingent gemacht werden soll, dann wirkt Geschlecht selbst auf einem übergeordneten ontologischen Niveau. Diese Frage nach der Beziehung zwischen Geschlecht und Kontingenz im nachkantischen Kontext war der Impuls für Friedrich Schlegels Poetik der Ehe und der darin vollzogenen Rückkehr zum platonischen Mythos von Liebe als Wiedervereinigung zweier Teile, welche bei näherer Betrachtung nur eine weitere Inszenierung einer Metaphysik

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<sup>15</sup> Vgl. *Fields of Sense*, 374 und 94.

darstellt und keine Kontingenz in letzter Instanz erlaubt.<sup>16</sup> Erst in Dorothea Schlegels Antwort auf *Lucinde*, ihrem 1801 veröffentlichten Roman *Florentin*, wirkt Geschlecht völlig kontingent. Der Roman inszeniert aber eine revidierte Version von Gabriels Sinnfeldontologie: während Kontingenz nur durch die Unhintergebarkeit des Geistes in der Sinnfeldontologie ermöglicht wird, ist in Dorothea Schlegels *Florentin* eine tiefergreifende Unhintergebarkeit des Körpers zu finden, die über einen transzendentalen Ansatz zur Ontologie hinauszugehen scheint.

## 2. Vom Zeichen zum Sinnfeld: Dorothea Schlegels *Florentin* und seine Rezeption

In der Forschung zu Dorothea Schlegel und ihrer Position in der Frühromantik sind zwei Bilder auffällig, die auf zwei verschiedene Haltungen gegenüber der Autorin von *Florentin* hindeuten. Das erste wirkt herablassend und enthüllt ein Zögern, ihr Werk als Beitrag zum frühromantischen Projekt ernst zu nehmen. Erst später in der Romantik würden Frauen schreiben, meinte Friedrich Kittler, als ob Friedrich Schlegels Bemerkung, dass Frauen zu viele Poesie besitzen, um selber Gedichte zu schreiben, ohne Ironie zu lesen wäre.<sup>17</sup> Eine ähnliche Haltung ist bei Lacoue-Labarthe und Nancy zu erkennen. In *Das Literarisch-Absolute* gilt Friedrich Schlegels Eheroman *Lucinde* als die einzige Referenz für die „literarische Figur von Dorothea.“<sup>18</sup> Ihr eigener Roman wird nie erwähnt. Obwohl wichtige Untersuchungen zu den theoretischen Leistungen der Frauen in frühromantischen Kreisen inzwischen erschienen sind, wird dieses Bild, das Schriften von Frauen getrennt von den theoretischen Zielen der Romantik hält, nur langsam und teilweise korrigiert.<sup>19</sup>

Das andere Bild, welches öfter in der literaturwissenschaftlichen Befassung mit Dorothea Schlegels Werk vorkommt, ist das Bild einer Frau, die unter ihrem Status als doppelte Minderheit—als Jüdin und Frau—lebenslang leiden musste und nur ihre eigene Position in den existierenden

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<sup>16</sup> Vgl. Stefan Matuscheks Beitrag „Über die Diotima“ und Mark-Georg Dehrmanns Bemerkungen zu „Lucinde“ in Johannes Endres (Hg.), *Friedrich Schlegel-Handbuch*, Stuttgart 2017, 79-80 bzw. 171-178.

<sup>17</sup> Vgl. KFSa II, 268: Nr. 127: „Die Poesie der Dichter bedürfen die Frauen weniger, weil ihr eigenstes Wesen Poesie ist“. Für Kittlers Argument vgl. „In den Wind schreibend, Bettina“ in Friedrich A. Kittler, *Dichter, Mutter, Kind*, München 1998, 233-234.

<sup>18</sup> Vgl. *L'Absolu littéraire*, 185.

<sup>19</sup> Bemerkenswerte Vertreter dieser korrigierenden Tendenz sind Adrian Daub und Anna Ezekiel. Vgl. Adrian Daub, *Uncivil Unions: The Metaphysics of Marriage in German Idealism and Romanticism*, Chicago 2012 und Anna C. Ezekiel, „Metamorphosis, Personhood, and Power in Karoline von Günderrode“, *European Romantic Review* 25, no. 6 (November 2, 2014), 773-91.



sozialen Strukturen der Zeit auszutarieren versuchte.<sup>20</sup> Abgesehen von ein paar kurzfristigen Fluchtlinien, von denen das Schreiben ihres einzigen Romans sowie das Verlassen ihres ersten Manns zugunsten Friedrich Schlegel die klarsten Beispiele darbieten, setzt sich das Bild einer Frau zusammen, die in einer fast stoischen Akzeptanz den Erwartungen ihrer Zeit zu entsprechen versuchte. Sie gab alles für ihren zweiten Mann und seine Arbeit auf, und trat selbst in den Hintergrund. Obwohl dieses Bild sympathischer als das erste wirkt, bietet es auch nur eine lückenhafte Darstellung an. In *Florentin* und Dorothea Schlegels Bemerkungen zum Roman ist eine tiefgreifende Auseinandersetzung mit ontologischen Fragen über die Rolle von Kontingenz in der metaphysischen Beziehung zwischen Wirklichkeit und Möglichkeit enthalten, die auch soziale Verhältnisse—vor allem Geschlechterverhältnisse—nicht unberührt lässt. Es handelt sich dabei um nichts weniger als den Appell, ein neues „Naturgesetz“ zu finden, welches aktiv an der Schöpfung neuer Sinnfelder arbeitet.<sup>21</sup>

Dorothea Schlegel war lebenslang in verschiedenen intellektuellen Bereichen tätig. Obwohl *Florentin* ihr einziger Roman bleiben wird, verfasste sie eine Vielzahl von Übersetzungen.<sup>22</sup> Sie schrieb ihre eigenen Beiträge zum frühromantischen Organ *Athenaeum*, obwohl dieses Werk, wie das Werk von vielen Frauen der Frühromantik, nur teilweise anerkannt wurde.<sup>23</sup> Im Kontext des Jenaer Kreises entstand in den Jahren zwischen 1797 und 1800 Dorothea Schlegels enge Verbindung zu Friedrich Schlegel sowie der Impuls für den Roman *Florentin*. 1799 wurde Friedrich Schlegels Eheroman *Lucinde* veröffentlicht, welcher als Inszenierung des frühromantischen Ideals einer Symphilosophie konzipiert wurde und unsubtile Darstellungen von Friedrichs und Dorotheas skandalöser Affäre enthielt.<sup>24</sup> Kurz nach der Veröffentlichung von *Lucinde* begann Dorothea Schlegel ihren eigenen Roman zu konzipieren, welcher als Antwort auf Friedrichs *Lucinde* gelten sollte. Es gibt hinreichende Gründe, *Florentin* als Kritik an *Lucinde* sowie als

<sup>20</sup> Vgl. Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik: Epoche, Werke, Wirkung*, München 2000, 112-149.

<sup>21</sup> Vgl. Liliane Weissberg, „Schreiben als Selbstentwurf“, *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 47, no. 3 (1995), 243.

<sup>22</sup> Vgl. „The Magic of Translation: Dorothea Schlegel’s ‚Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin‘“, *Pacific Coast Philology* 40, no. 1 (2005), 36-56. Nach einigen Berechnungen hat sie während dieser Zeit mehr als Friedrich geschrieben. Vgl. Liliane Weissbergs Nachwort zu Ullstein Werkausgabe von Dorothea Schlegel, *Florentin: Roman. Fragmente. Varianten*, hg. v. Liliane Weissberg, Frankfurt a. M. 1987, 222.

<sup>23</sup> Vgl. den Rezensionenartikel zu Basilius von Ramdohrs *Moralische Erzählungen* in der letzten *Athenaeum* Fassung: „Moralische Erzählungen von Ramdohr“, *Athenaeum*, Berlin 1800, Bd. 3, 238-266.

<sup>24</sup> Vgl. Dehrmann, „Lucinde“, 171-178.

ihren eigenen Beitrag zum frühromantischen Projekt zu betrachten, wobei Letzteres bislang nicht ausreichend untersucht worden ist.<sup>25</sup>

Der Roman stellt die Wanderungen eines jungen italienischen Mannes dar, der durch eine zufällige Begegnung im Wald das Leben eines deutschen Grafs rettet. Florentin verbringt einige Wochen bei der Familie aus dem deutschen Adelstand und befreundet sich schnell mit der Tochter Juliane und ihrem Verlobten Eduard. Schon in den ersten Kapiteln ist ein gewisses Versagen einer Logik der Referenz zu bemerken, die auf eine Flexibilität in der Beziehung zwischen Wirklichkeit und Möglichkeit und die Eröffnung neuer Sinnfelder hinausdeutet.<sup>26</sup> Der italienische Waise Florentin, der zunächst ohne Namen und nur als Reisender eingeführt wurde, wird von einer deutschen Familie höchsten Rangs aufgenommen.<sup>27</sup> Der Großteil der Erzählung spielt in den Wochen unmittelbar vor Julianes und Eduards Hochzeit, die aus verschiedenen Gründen verschoben werden muss. Während dieser Wartezeit machen Florentin und Eduard eine Reihe von Ausflügen zu den nahliegenden Dörfern, wo sie sich als Charaktere aus verschiedenen Gesellschaftsschichten verkleiden und sich auf Kosten der Einheimischen lustig machen:

Eduard und Florentin hatten einigemal kleine Reisen im Gebirg und in der umliegenden Gegend gemacht. In abwechselnden Verkleidungen hatten sie die benachbarten Städtchen und Dörfer durchzogen, auf Kirmsen, Hochzeiten, Jahrmärkten, bald als Krämer oder als Spielleute. Manches lustige Abenteuer kam ihnen entgegen, sie wiesen keines von sich. Wenn sie dann von ihren Wanderungen zurückkamen, hatten sie viel zu erzählen und von den Eroberungen zu sprechen, die sie wollten gemacht haben.<sup>28</sup>

Zu diesem Zeitpunkt ist eine gewisse Flexibilität im metaphysischen Raum zwischen Wirklichkeit und Möglichkeit zu bemerken, die aber bald eine Obergrenze erreicht. Juliane äußert den Wunsch, an einer dieser Ausflüge

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<sup>25</sup> Vgl. Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik* und Elena Pnevmonidou, „Die Absage an das Romantische Ich: Dorothea Schlegels *Florentin* als Umschrift von Friedrich Schlegels *Lucinde*“, *German Life and Letters* 58, no. 3 (2005), 271-92.

<sup>26</sup> Adrian Daub identifiziert in der Geschichte eine „unendliche Aufschiebung von Signifikanten [...], welche familiäre Beziehungen versprechen, die nie geliefert werden.“ Vgl. *Metaphysical Unions*, 172.

<sup>27</sup> Vgl. *Florentin*, 11: „Mutig trabte ein Reisender den Hügel auf.“ Becker-Cantarino schreibt von einem „Verschwimmen“ aller festen Rollen im Roman, eine These, die ich im Laufe dieses Aufsatzes leicht korrigieren möchte. Es geht nicht *per se* nur um die Konstanz oder das Instabil-werden von Rollen, sondern um die Flexibilität bzw. Inflexibilität dieser Grenzen in einem gegebenen Sinnfeld. Vgl. Becker-Cantarino, *Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik*, 141.

<sup>28</sup> *Florentin*, 36.

teilzunehmen.<sup>29</sup> Die Eltern reagieren ängstlich und wollen es zuerst nicht erlauben. Sie werden letztendlich überzeugt, machen aber so viele Umstände und geben so viele Vorschriften, „so viele Regeln und Warnungen [...] daß Juliane, ganz ängstlich gemacht, sich im Herzen vornahm, gewiß nichts zu übertreten, und gewiß zum letztenmal eine solche Erlaubnis zu begehren.“<sup>30</sup> Auch die Annahme einer anderen sozialen Position durch Verkleidung ist für Juliane keine unterhaltsame Möglichkeit unter anderen, sondern die notwendige Vorbedingung des Verlassens ihres Elternhauses. Statt als Krämer oder Schauspieler muss sie sich als jugendlicher Mann verkleiden, um mit den jungen Männern ausgehen zu können.<sup>31</sup> An dieser Stelle sehen wir nicht zum letzten Mal die Inflexibilität einer sozialen Struktur, die trotz ihrer Kontingenz die Macht von Wirklichkeit besitzt und keine Alternative zu diesem Zeitpunkt erlaubt.

Eine ähnliche Problematik lässt sich in der Geschichte von Florentins Kindheit bemerken. Er stammt von einer unbenannten Insel an der italienischen Küste und sein Vater starb kurz nach seiner Geburt. Florentins Erziehung wird von einem strengen Benediktinerorden übernommen und er fühlt sich von der abverlangten Gehorsamkeit im Kloster stark bedrängt. Nach vier Jahren unter diesen strengen Bedingungen verlässt er das Kloster. Er geht zunächst mit seinem Freund Manfredi in eine Militärschule. Aber die Militärschule wird nur die erste von vielen Haltestellen in Florentins „eigentlichem Reiseleben“ sein.<sup>32</sup> Eines Tages empfängt er eine Nachricht von seiner Schwester Felicita, die als Nonne geweiht werden soll. Er liest die Einladung zu der Einweihung als einen versteckten Hilfeschrei und versucht sie zu retten, aber das Komplott wird entdeckt. Florentin muss sofort fliehen.<sup>33</sup> Kurz bevor er geht, hat seine Mutter eine unerwartete Nachricht für ihn. Die Schwester, die er retten wollte, ist nicht seine Blutsverwandte. Diese Mutter ist auch nicht seine eigentliche Mutter, obwohl sie „mütterliche Sorge für [ihn] getragen“ hat.<sup>34</sup> Er reist nach Florenz, nach Rom und in die

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<sup>29</sup> Vgl. *Florentin*, 36: „Juliane bekam den Einfall sie einmal zu begleiten; und das nächste Mal, daß sich die beiden jungen Männer wieder zu einer solchen abenteuerlichen Reise anschickten, teilte sie Eduard ihren Wunsch sie zu begleiten mit.“

<sup>30</sup> Vgl. *Florentin*, 36-37: „Und nun wurden noch so viele Anstalten gemacht, so viel Regeln und Warnungen gegeben, daß Juliane, ganz ängstlich gemacht, sich im Herzen vornahm, gewiß nichts zu übertreten, und gewiß zum letztenmal eine solche Erlaubnis zu begehren.“

<sup>31</sup> Vgl. *Florentin*, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Vgl. *Florentin*, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Ähnlich wie bei Julianes Verkleidung wird hier der Unterschied zwischen Florentin und dem Schicksal seiner Schwester (sie kann nicht anders sein) mehrmals betont. Vgl. *Florentin*, 63-64.

<sup>34</sup> Vgl. *Florentin*, 64: „Ich bin zwar nicht deine Mutter, aber ich habe mütterliche Sorge für dich getragen [...]“

Schweiz. Er träumt mehrmals von Amerika, statt auf seinen Hintergrund und seine „eigentliche“ Familie fixiert zu bleiben.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. Geschlecht auf der Kantischen Grenzlinie: männliche Urteilskraft und ihre romantischen Nachläufer

Während *Florentin* in einem breiten Sinne auf die Bewegung von einer referentiellen Logik, die durch metaphysische Strukturen auf soziale Verhältnissen wirkt, zu einer Eröffnung neuer Sinnfelder zielt, werden Charaktere im Roman mehrmals mit Strukturen konfrontiert, deren Kontingenz keine Auswirkung auf die Macht ihrer Wirklichkeit zu haben scheint. Grenzen zwischen einer Ontologie roher Kontingenz, metaphysische Untersuchungen von Wirklichkeit und Möglichkeit und die Macht von bestehenden sozialen Verhältnissen werden sogar in Frage gestellt und flexibel dargestellt. Aber solche Grenzen werden in vielen Fällen nicht eigentlich überwunden. Für jede Stelle, in der soziale Verhältnisse zu verschwimmen scheinen, gibt es ein anderes Moment, in dem eine Charakter mit der Festigkeit einer Rolle—mit der Inflexibilität einer Metaphysik der Substanz, der Identität—konfrontiert wird. Diese Betrachtung gilt vor allem für die nicht-männlichen Akteurinnen des Romans. Florentins Schwester wird nicht gerettet. Und für Juliane ist die Annahme einer anderen Rolle kein Spiel, sondern die notwendige Bedingung, um ihr Elternhaus verlassen zu können. Wenn Kontingenz nach Kant als allergreifendes Medium der Urteilskraft wirkt und die Beziehung zwischen Wirklichkeit und Möglichkeit in der Metaphysik ausmacht, wird in *Florentin* mehrmals hervorgehoben, dass Fragen von Geschlecht und Geschlechterpolitik unerlässlich für solche ontologischen Untersuchungen über die Rolle von Kontingenz in der Urteilskraft sind.<sup>36</sup>

An dieser Stelle trifft Geschlecht das Herz des kritischen Projekts. In einer oft übersehenen Passage in der Polemik gegen eine „skeptische Befriedigung der mit sich selbst veruneinigten reinen Vernunft“ in der

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<sup>35</sup> Es wird kurz erwähnt, dass Manfredi „keine Mühe und keine Nachforschung zu sparen“ verspricht, „um etwas über [Florentins] Geburt und [...] Eltern zu erfahren,“ aber der Versuch gerät bald in Vergessenheit. Vgl. *Florentin*, 65.

<sup>36</sup> Vgl. Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 85: „Given that our access to existence is mediated through predicative determinations, reality is thus only available to us in judgment and therefore only ever in the medium of contingency.“ Die Politik dieser Urteile wird oft von Kants Kommentatoren hervorgehoben, obwohl diese expliziten Geschlechtsaspekten oft übersehen werden. Vgl. Eckart Försters „The Hidden Plan of Nature“ in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty und James Schmid (Hg.), *Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, Cambridge 2009 und Hannah Arendt, *Das Urteilen*, München 2012.

„Transzendentalen Methodenlehre“ der ersten Kritik beschreibt Kant die Urteilskraft als explizit männlich:

Der erste Schritt in Sachen der reinen Vernunft, der das Kindesalter derselben auszeichnet, ist dogmatisch. Der eben genannte zweite Schritt ist skeptisch, und zeugt von Vorsichtigkeit der durch Erfahrung gewitzigten Urteilskraft. Nun ist aber noch ein dritter Schritt nötig, der nur der gereiften und männlichen Urteilskraft zukömmt, welche feste und ihre Allgemeinheit nach bewährte Maximen zum Grunde hat [...].<sup>37</sup>

Es bleibt höchst unklar, wie sich die Urteilskraft in Bezug auf dieser unerwarteten Eigenschaft *männlich* verhalten soll, aber es ist wichtig zu bemerken, dass Männlichkeit an derselben Kluft zwischen Natur und Freiheit, Transzendentalen und Empirischem wie die Urteilskraft selbst kranken muss. Kant sagt nichts weiteres zum Thema und es bleibt unklar, ob Männlichkeit eine bestimmende Kraft wie Ethik sein soll oder notwendig-konstitutiv wie metaphysische Überlegungen wirkt. Auf jeden Fall sollte man zwischen den anthropologischen und transzendentalen Standpunkten unterscheiden.

Diese Unklarheit der Urteilskraft sowie der Rolle der Geschlechter in der Funktion von Urteilskraft führt Friedrich Schlegel zum Vorschlag einer Wiedervereinigung der Geschlechter im Sinne einer platonischen Ehe, welche als grundlegende nachkantische Mythologie für die Philosophie dienen soll. „Vielleicht würde eine ganz neue Epoche der Wissenschaften und Künste beginnen,“ schreibt er in einem Fragment „wenn die Symphilosophie und Symposie so allgemein und so innig würde, daß es nichts Seltnes mehr wäre, wenn mehre[re] sich gegenseitig ergänzende Naturen gemeinschaftliche Werke bildeten.“<sup>38</sup> Darüber hinaus soll diese Ehe das höchste Desideratum der Romantik—die Überwindung der kantischen Grenzlinie—erfüllen. An Stelle der „Kluft“<sup>39</sup> zwischen Natur und Freiheit

<sup>37</sup> Vgl. KrV A762, B 789.

<sup>38</sup> Vgl. KFSA I 2, 181: Nr 125.

<sup>39</sup> Vgl. Kant, *Einleitung* in die *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (A LII, B LIV): „Der Verstand ist a priori gesetzgebend für die Natur als Objekt der Sinne, zu einem theoretischen Erkenntnis derselben in einer möglichen Erfahrung. Die Vernunft ist a priori gesetzgebend für die Freiheit und ihre eigene Kausalität, als das Übersinnliche in dem Subjekte, zu einem unbedingtpraktischen Erkenntnis. Das Gebiet des Naturbegriffs, unter der einen, und das des Freiheitsbegriffs, unter der anderen Gesetzgebung, sind gegen allen wechselseitigen Einfluß, den für sich (ein jedes nach seinen Grundgesetzen) auf einander haben *könnten*, durch die große Kluft, welche das Übersinnliche von den Erscheinungen trennt, gänzlich abgesondert. Der Freiheitsbegriff bestimmt nichts in Ansehung der theoretischen Erkenntnis der Natur; der Naturbegriff eben sowohl nichts in Ansehung der praktischen Gesetze der Freiheit: und es ist in sofern nicht möglich, eine Brücke von einem Gebiete zu dem andern hinüberzuschlagen.“

feiert man hier eine überbrückende Hochzeit. Während Kant Natur und Freiheit „gegen allen wechselseitigen Einfluß“ versichert hatte, zielt die Romantik auf eine kombinatorische Alternative—eine progressive Universalpoesie, die diese Erfahrungsbereiche „bald mischen, bald verschmelzen“ sollte.<sup>40</sup> Wenn die „neue Epoche der Wissenschaft und Künste“ zu positivem Wissen für die Romantik führen soll, würde man nicht nur männliche Urteilskraft, sondern auch ein weibliches Gegenstück brauchen.<sup>41</sup>

Friedrich Schlegels fragmentarischer Roman *Lucinde* gilt als Inszenierung dieser metaphysischen Ehe, die Metaphysik sogar *als Ehe* inszeniert. Hier handelt es sich nicht mehr um eine allein agierende Urteilskraft, die als Männlichkeit funktioniert, sondern um die Notwendigkeit eines sexuellen Unterschieds innerhalb der Urteilskraft selber. Es soll „eigentlich nur zwei Stände unter den Menschen geben,“ schreibt der Protagonist Julius an seiner Frau – die bildende Männlichkeit und die gebildete Weiblichkeit.<sup>42</sup> „Was ist denn aber das Bestimmende oder das Bestimmte selbst?“, sinnt der Erzähler weiter nach. „In der Männlichkeit ist es das Namenlose. Und was ist das Namenlose in der Weiblichkeit? – das Unbestimmte.“<sup>43</sup> Obwohl auf den ersten Blick die Weiblichkeit die Funktion einer rohen Kontingenz anzunehmen scheint, die das höchste ontologische Niveau markiert, taucht in letzter Instanz nicht die Kontingenz der Weiblichkeit, sondern die Notwendigkeit dieser Weiblichkeit auf, die sich selbst nur als Gegenstück zum Männlichen verstehen muss. Die gesetzgebende Kraft dieser binären Ausdifferenzierung ist auch an der Figur Wilhelmine zu beobachten. Obwohl die Figur zuerst als unbestimmtes, androgynes Kind in der Erzählung gefeiert wird, gewinnt sie im Laufe der Erzählung mehr geschlechtsspezifische Merkmale.<sup>44</sup> Es gibt keinen dritten Weg, der die Metaphysik der Ehe selbst kontingent machen könnte.

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<sup>40</sup> KFSa I 2, 181: Nr 116.

<sup>41</sup> Vgl. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism*. Diese Idee von Ehe und einem notwendigen binären Geschlechtsunterschied in der Natur, der organisches Wachstum und Reproduktion vorantreibt, war seit Linné Teil des naturphilosophischen Diskurses. Vgl. Wilhelm von Humboldts 1795 Aufsatz „Über den Geschlechtsunterschied und dessen Einfluss auf die organische Natur“ in *Die Horen*, Tübingen 1795, Bd. II, 99-132 und Goethes morphologische Schriften. Vgl. Bryan Klausmeyer, „Abschlussbewegungen: Goethe, Freud, and Spectral Forms of Life“, *Goethe Yearbook* 26, no. 1 (2019).

<sup>42</sup> Vgl. KFSa I 5: 62.

<sup>43</sup> Vgl. KFSa I 5: 71.

<sup>44</sup> Vgl. „Die Charakteristik der kleinen Wilhelmine“ in *Lucinde*, KFSa I 5, 13-15, dazu Daub, *Uncivil Unions*, 168: „Julius is so caught up in the notion of unification through sex that he reflexively ‘determines’ the product of that unification“ und das Kapitel zu Friedrich Schlegel: „Androgynous Chaos—Androgynous Stasis“ in Catriona MacLeod, *Embodying Ambiguity: Androgyny and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Keller*, Detroit 1998, 66-90.

#### 4. Die Unhintergebarkeit von Körpern

In Vergleich zu *Lucinde* ist in Dorothea Schlegels Roman *Florentin* eine mögliche Alternative zu finden, wobei ein einfacher, binärer Geschlechtsunterschied als kontingent präsentiert wird. Schon am Anfang des Romans tritt Florentin in einer Landschaft auf, die ihren „Vermählungstag“ feiert:

Es war an einem der ersten schönen Frühlingsmorgen. Allenthalben, auf Feldern, auf Wiesen und im Wald, waren noch Spuren des vergangenen Winters sichtbar, und der Härte, womit er lange gewütet: noch einmal hatte er mächtig im Sturm seine Schwingen geschüttelt, aber es war zum letztenmal. Die Wolken waren vertrieben vom Sturm, die Sonne durchgebrochen, und eine laue milde Wärme durchströmte die Luft. Junge Grasspitzen drängten sich hervor, Veilchen und süße Schlüsselblumen erhoben furchtsam ihre Köpfchen, die Erde war der Fesseln entledigt, und feierte ihren Vermählungstag.<sup>45</sup>

Florentin fühlt sich entfremdet von diesem Naturbild, das seit Linné als organische Ehe inszeniert wird.<sup>46</sup> Er ist ledig und reist allein. Aber statt zu heiraten reist er am Ende des Romans einfach weiter. Dieser Schluss inszeniert eine Ausdifferenzierung des romantischen Absoluten—der Natur—die auf einer höheren Ordnung als Friedrich Schlegels Metaphysik der Ehe wirkt, weil Ehe selbst nur eine Möglichkeit unter anderen darbietet. Wenn die Vielzahl heterogener Erscheinungen auf der Welt nicht mit derart metaphysischer Skepsis begegnet werden soll, die auf eine Trennung von Sein und Schein insistiert, muss nicht nur der Geschlechtsunterschied im Sinne von einem binären Unterschied zwischen zwei Geschlechtern überwunden werden. Diese Differenz muss selbst als etwas Kontingentes gezeigt werden.

Zum Schluss möchte ich kurz zur Kernthematik der Sinnfeldontologie und derer Auseinandersetzung mit Objekten zurückkehren, die mit diesem in *Florentin* gewonnenen Verständnis von Kontingenz eng verbunden bleibt. Ontologie wird in letzter Instanz als kontingent gezeigt, aber auf Kosten eines

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<sup>45</sup> *Florentin*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> Vgl. Linnés *Systema naturae* und Londa Schiebinger, „Why Mammals Are Called Mammals: Gender Politics in Eighteenth-Century Natural History“, *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 2 (1993), 382-411. *Florentin*, 11: „Sei meine Reise wie mein Leben und wie die ganze Natur, unaufhaltsam vorwärts! ... Was mir nur begegnen wird auf dieser Lebensreise, oder diesem Reiselben? Ich rühme mich ein freier Mensch zu sein, und dieser Sonnenschein, dieses laue Umfängen, die jungen Knospen, das Erwarten der Dinge, die mich umgeben, ist schuld, daß auch ich erwarte... und was? ... War mir doch mit allem bunten Spielzeug schon längst Hoffnung und Erwartung entflohen!... Närrisch genug wäre es, wenn mich dieser Weg auch endlich an den rechten Ort führte, wie alles Leben zum unvermeidlichen Ziel.“

grundlegenden Aspektes von Gabriels Ansicht des nachkantischen transzendentalen Idealismus – des Transzendentalen selbst. Statt Geist tritt eine heterogene Vielzahl von Körpern als der privilegierte Ort für Ontologie auf, als *locus*, an dem Fragen über Wirklichkeit, Möglichkeit und die Kontingenz dieser Beziehung mehrfach gestellt, entschieden, und neu gestellt werden. Ontologie hängt nicht mehr von der Unhintergebarkeit des Geistes, sondern von der Unhintergebarkeit der Körper ab, die allein in der Lage sind, ontologische Betrachtungen in Verbindung mit Metaphysik und sozialen Verhältnissen zu setzen. Diese Unhintergebarkeit der Körper in Fragen zu Kontingenz wird vor allem in einer Geistergeschichte gezeigt, die nicht von Florentin, sondern von Juliane in Dorothea Schlegels Roman erzählt wird.<sup>47</sup> Während des oben erwähnten Ausflugs mit Florentin und Eduard, in dem die drei in einem Sturm geraten werden und in einer Mühle übernachten müssen, erzählt Juliane die Geschichte einer jungen Frau, die schwanger werden muss, damit ihr Mann ein wertvolles Gut erben kann. Nach einer Weile wird klar, dass etwas nicht funktioniert. Kein Kind kommt und die Frau versucht alles, um diese Lage zu ändern. Sie kauft Fetische, macht Pilgerreisen und besucht diverse Ärzte, aber alles umsonst. Sie sorgt sich um ihre Ehe und schwört eines Tages einen verzweifelten Eid. Wenn sie im nächsten Jahr nicht schwanger wird, dann wird sie ihren Mann verlassen und den Rest ihres Lebens in einem Kloster verbringen. Kurz danach passiert etwas Merkwürdiges: sie beginnt die Erscheinung eines Kindes zu sehen, was zunächst nur größere Sorge um ihren Zustand verursacht. Das Kind erscheint überall in ihrem Zimmer, draußen im Garten, wo es vor ihr spielt und lacht, aber niemand außer der jungen Frau ist in der Lage, dieses Kind zu sehen.<sup>48</sup> Sie muss die Erscheinung ausführlich beschreiben, um andere zu überzeugen, dass sie „wirklich sähe, was sie zu sehen vorgab“:

Es schien ihr in einem Alter von drei Jahren, trug ein leichtes weißes Gewand, Arme und Füße waren nackt, um den Leib hatte es einen blauen Gürtel von hellglänzendem Zeuge, dessen Enden hinter ihm niederflatterten. Das Köpfchen sei mit himmlischen blonden Locken, wie mit den zartesten Strahlen umgeben, das mit den kindlichen Wangen, dem frischen Munde und den lachenden blauen Augen wie ein wunderschönes Engelsköpfchen aussehe. Das ganze Figürchen umschwebe hinreißende Anmut; kurz, sie beschrieb es so umständlich,

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<sup>47</sup> Diese *mise en abyme* lässt sich auch als Inszenierung Dorothea Schlegels eigener Position in der Romantik verstehen.

<sup>48</sup> Vgl. *Florentin*, 99.



daß man gar nicht mehr zweifeln durfte, sie sähe es in der Tat vor sich [...].<sup>49</sup>

Aber im Vergleich zu Kants Behandlung solcher Ereignisse wird die Erscheinung nicht als Schwärmerei, sondern als real behandelt—und ganz in einem körperlichen Sinne. Neun Monate später bringt die junge Frau ein Kind zur Welt, und die Erscheinung ist nicht mehr zu sehen.<sup>50</sup> Auch wenn es als Halluzination gelten könnte, wird durch einen Geist in letzter Instanz auf einen Körper zurückverwiesen, der die strengsten Bedingungen einer nachkantischen Urteilskraft erfüllt. Sie verbindet, sie trennt und sie schöpft etwas Neues, Unvorhersehbares, und höchst Kontingentes—ein kleines Mädchen:

Nach einiger Zeit ereignete sich etwas, welches das Wunderbare dieser Erscheinung zugleich erklärte und vergrößerte. Die Marquise fühlte nämlich deutliche Zeichen, daß sie guter Hoffnung sei [...] Neun Monate nach dem Tage der ersten Erscheinung ward sie glücklich von einer Tochter entbunden. Während ihrer Niederkunft sah sie die Erscheinung an ihrem Lager unbeweglich stehen, in dem Augenblick aber, daß ihr Kind zur Welt kam, war jene verschwunden, und sie hat sie niemals wiedergesehen.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Florentin*, 99.

<sup>50</sup> Vgl. „Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik“ in Immanuel Kant, *Werke in zwölf Bänden*, Frankfurt a. M. 1977, 923-989. Dazu Jeremiah Alberg, „What Dreams May Come: Kant’s *Träume eines Geistersehers* Elucidated by the Dreams of a Coquette“, *Kant-Studien* 106, no. 2 (June 28, 2015), 169-200. Adrian Daub hat auch die Verwirrung bemerkt, die das System-Subjekt an dieser Erfahrung erleiden müsste. Vgl. *Metaphysics of Marriage*, 176: „The figure of the ghost child that is lacking precisely in causation casts into confusion the autotelic subject-work of *Lucinde*.“

<sup>51</sup> *Florentin*, 101.



# Symphilosophie

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## Expanding the Canon

### The Political Philosophy of Bettina von Arnim

*Giulia Valpione*<sup>\*</sup>

#### ABSTRACT

This article focuses on Bettina Brentano-von Arnim's political philosophy and argues against the traditional view that the feminine is extraneous to the political sphere. The introduction begins with some methodological reflections on the status of the feminist history of philosophy. Then the article provides a summary of the role that women had to play according to the male philosophers of *Frühromantik*. In the third part, the author focuses on a number of concepts underpinning von Arnim's political philosophy – 'law' and 'equality' in particular. It attempts to demonstrate the originality of her political philosophy and highlight its link with the modern philosophical-political tradition. The article concludes by examining the relationship between self-government and the government of others as outlined by the philosopher.

*Keywords:* natural law, feminist history of philosophy, modern contractualism, *Bildung*, equality

#### ABSTRACT

L'articolo "Espandere il canone: la filosofia politica di Bettina von Arnim" si concentra sulla filosofia politica di Bettina Brentano-von Arnim e il suo obiettivo è scuotere l'immagine tradizionale del femminile come estraneo alla sfera politica. Dopo un'iniziale introduzione metodologica (in cui verrà brevemente discussa la posizione della storia femminista della filosofia) e un breve riassunto sul ruolo che la donna doveva sostenere secondo i filosofi del Primo Romanticismo tedesco, l'articolo si concentra su alcuni concetti alla base della filosofia politica di Bettina von Arnim ('legge' e 'uguaglianza' in particolare), mostrandone sia l'originalità sia il legame con la tradizione filosofico-politica moderna. L'articolo si chiude sul rapporto indicato dalla filosofa tra governo di sé e degli altri.

*Keywords:* Diritto naturale, Storia femminista della filosofia, contrattualismo moderno, *Bildung*, uguaglianza

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<sup>\*</sup> PhD, Post-doctoral researcher at Dipartimento FISSPA, Università degli Studi di Padova, p.zza Capitanato 3, 35139 Padova (Italy) – giulia.valpione@unipd.it

*Pfarrer.* Sie haben einen männlichen Geist.  
Dies Prädikat können Sie ohne Schmeichelei annehmen.  
*Fr. Rat.* Ich mag Ihr Prädikat nicht.  
Staun an den Mut eines Weibes und ihre Heldenkraft,  
wie sie mit furchtlosem Blick den Kampf besteht!  
Hoch über Gefahr hinweg trägt ihr Herz die Streiterin;  
Unermeßlicher Stärke geneußt sie, von keiner Furcht die Seele bestürmt.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, studies of the philosophy of women belonging to Romanticism have multiplied and can help better question the marginality of women within the development of German philosophy. Although the importance of these women thinkers can no longer be denied, it is also evident that within the tradition of German Romanticism the female nature was still linked with the idea of sentimentality and domestic privacy. It was often contrasted with the male nature, where the latter was considered as rational, public and political. This article critiques and calls into question this image of femininity. My aim is not to re-evaluate femininity conceived as affectivity, privacy and naivety and set it against masculine rationality and the public sphere. As Genevieve Lloyd has rightly pointed out,<sup>2</sup> any re-evaluation of femininity conceived as the affective and private sphere would only imply a corroboration of the norms that structure it. I argue that Bettina von Arnim's<sup>3</sup> philosophy allows us to disrupt this normativity. It presents a woman philosopher whose concepts and ideas necessarily break those boundaries within which femininity has been constituted by the philosophical tradition: in fact, she claimed that women should be recognised as being capable of rational abstraction, but also that they should play a political role in society and could formulate a consistent political philosophy.

The first part of this article is devoted to the construction of femininity within the philosophy of the male thinkers of Early Romanticism – especially Friedrich Schlegel – in order to identify the role they attributed to women, and the extent to which they accepted the idea of women as individuals interested and active within the political sphere.

Bettina von Arnim's thought will be analysed starting from section §3, with the aim of understanding whether she herself ascribes to womanhood

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<sup>1</sup> Bettina von Arnim, *Dies Buch gehört dem König*, in Bettina von Arnim, *Werke und Briefe in vier Bänden* (=AWB), vol. 3, ed. Walter Schmitz (Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1986), 181–182.

<sup>2</sup> Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason* (London: Routledge, 1993 2 ed.), 105. I would like to thank the peer reviewers for their suggestions, which greatly helped to improve this article.

<sup>3</sup> In line with academic studies on Bettina Brentano-von Arnim, in this article she will be cited using her husband's surname (von Armin) and not by her first family name.

the same image that other people had sought to impose on her. Her interest in European (especially French) political events will be taken into consideration.

Explicating and searching for clues that testify to Bettina's interest in political and social transformations would not be enough, however, to reserve a place for her within the canon of the history of philosophy.<sup>4</sup> According to Mary Ellen Waithe, an author may be recognised as a philosopher if the concepts and arguments ascribed to other philosophers can already be perceived and detected in their writings.<sup>5</sup> Here we might run the risk of reducing the thought of a female philosopher to an incomplete or bad copy of the philosophy of her male counterparts. Thus, searching for ideas that have already been studied and are well-known through the works of male philosophers could imply that women philosophers are merely imperfect versions of those men who already occupy a place in the canon of the history of philosophy. The aim of this article is to seek a middle path between Bettina von Arnim's legitimisation as a philosopher and the recognition of her originality. She certainly belongs in the European philosophical tradition, but her thought has remained obscured in philosophical debates. With this awareness, I align myself with that feminist history of philosophy that Genevieve Lloyd calls 'positive', compared to the 'negative' one.<sup>6</sup> By including Bettina von Arnim in the historical canon of philosophy, it will be possible to integrate her into it without rejecting this canon in its entirety. Moreover, in this sense, I agree with Karen Green's position that it should be recognised that:

we [women] have been conscious participants in the social construction of the past. [...] We implicitly denigrate past women if we assume that

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Ellen Waithe differentiates between the 'philosophical compendium' (i.e. the totality of all philosophical works) and the 'historical canon of philosophy' (from which women are excluded): Mary Ellen Waithe, "Sex, Lies and Bigotry: The Canon of Philosophy," in *Methodological Reflections on Women's Contribution and Influence in the History of Philosophy*, ed. Sigridur Thorgeirsdottir and Ruth Edith Hagengruber (Dordrecht: Springer, 2020), 3–17.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Ellen Waithe, "Introduction," in *A History of Women Philosophers*, vol. 4: *Contemporary Women Philosophers: 1900-Today*, ed. Mary Ellen Waithe (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), xx.

<sup>6</sup> That is to say, the 'negative' (and defensive) feminist history of philosophy rejects and accuses the non-feminist history of philosophy of an underlying misogyny. Genevieve Lloyd, "Introduction", in *Feminism & History of Philosophy*, ed. Genevieve Lloyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1–2.

they were incapable of forging any values for themselves, and hastily dismiss the consciousness of previous women as defective.<sup>7</sup>

I will therefore try to show that Bettina von Arnim should be included in the history of philosophy with an original position of her own. At the same time, I will show the proximity of von Arnim's reflections to a number of romantic political concepts in order to justify her presence among authors that can be rightfully considered as 'romantic': even if there is secondary literature that underlines Bettina's awareness of social and political changes,<sup>8</sup> it does not yet fully justify the presence of her thought within the romantic philosophical-political tradition. It will therefore be possible to show that although the male authors of German Romanticism did not agree with female participation in politics and their interest in it, several women in this movement developed a philosophy (through concepts in common with the men) which still envisaged their involvement in politics and in philosophical-political discussions. Thus, as we shall see, an investigation of Bettina von Arnim's thought not only allows us to add a name to the list of philosophers belonging

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<sup>7</sup> Karen Green, *The Woman of Reason. Feminism, Humanism and Political Thought* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 150.

<sup>8</sup> In addition to those who are mentioned below in this article: Karl-Heinz Hahn, *Bettina von Arnim in ihrem Verhältnis zu Staat und Politik* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1959). Marie-Claire Hooock-Demarle, "Bettina als 'Zeugin' der Französischen Revolution," *Internationales Jahrbuch der Bettina von Arnim-Gesellschaft* 3 (1989), 81–92. Bernhard Gajek, "Bettine von Arnim und die bayerische Erweckungsbewegung," in *Die Erfahrung anderer Länder. Beiträge eines Wiepersdorfer Kolloquiums zu Achim und Bettina von Arnim*, ed. Heinz Hartl and Hartwig Schultz (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1994), 247–270; Fritz Böttger, *Bettina von Arnim. Zwischen Romantik und Revolution* (München: Wilhelm Heyne, 1995); Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "Zur politischen Romantik: Bettina von Arnim, die 'Frauenfrage' und der 'Feminismus'," in *Die echte Politik muß Erfinderin sein. Beiträge eine Wiepersdorfer Kolloquiums zu Bettina von Arnim*, ed. Hartwig Schultz (Berlin: Saint Albin Verlag, 1999), 217–248; Ulrike Landfester, "'Die echte Politik muß Erfinderin sein': Überlegungen zum Umgang mit Bettine von Arnims politischem Werk," in *Die echte Politik muß Erfinderin sein*, 1–37; Renata Dampc-Jarosz, "Frauen werden zum Subjekt. Die Selbstfindung der Frauen in der Romantik am Beispiel von Caroline Schlegel-Schelling und Bettina von Arnim," in *Erfolge und Niederlagen der Frauenfiguren in der deutschen und polnischen Literatur*, ed. Grazyna Szewczyk (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Slaskiego, 2000), 25–40; Ulrike Landfester, "Bettine Brentano-von Arnim (1785–1859) als politische Schriftstellerin: *Selbstdenken* ist der höchste Mut," in *Geist und Macht: Die Brentanos*, ed. Bernd Heidenreich (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2000), 71–91; Ursula Puschel, *Bettina von Arnim – politisch. Erkundungen, Entdeckungen, Erkenntnisse* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2005); Pia Schmid, "Bettina von Arnim und die soziale Frage," in *'Mit List und ... Kühnheit ... Widerstand leisten': Bettine von Arnims sozialpolitisches Handeln zwischen Privatheit und Öffentlichkeit*, ed. Wolfgang Bunzel, Kerstin Frei and Mechthild M. Jansen (Berlin: Saint-Albin Verlag, 2011), 91–108; Katrin Burgdorf, "Bettine Brentanos Briefe als Medium der Öffentlichkeit: Ein Schritt zur Umwertung der Geschlechterrollen?," in *Ich will keinem Mann nachtreten. Sophie von La Roche und Bettine von Arnim*, ed. Miriam Seidler and Mara Stuhlfauth (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2013), 47–64.

to our culture but also to reformulate what can be conceived as the ‘feminine’.

## 2. Romanticism on the Side of Women?

The commonly accepted image of the *Frühromantiker* is that of thinkers who were particularly influenced by social change,<sup>9</sup> as poets interested in the sphere of affectivity or as philosophers clearly against the institution of marriage.<sup>10</sup> This might suggest that Early German Romanticism could be a fruitful source of enquiry for a re-evaluation of the role played by women in the history of philosophy. Even if this is in some respects true, the role of women in *Frühromantik* is much more complicated than it may initially seem.

Certainly, since his earliest writings on ancient literature, Friedrich Schlegel emphasised the role of women, particularly in art. He published two texts on the role of women in Greek culture: *On Female Characters in Greek Poets* (1794) and *On Diotima* (1795). In this second text, in particular, Schlegel emancipates femininity from simply a domestic atmosphere. He underlines the accessibility of women to Greek art and culture,<sup>11</sup> in contrast to what was stated in the text of 1794.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in *On Diotima*, Schlegel argues against Rousseau: for the French philosopher, women are incapable of experiencing aesthetic enthusiasm.<sup>13</sup> According to Schlegel, certain types of enthusiasm are indeed strictly feminine. In this essay, Schlegel considers the traits of femininity to be tenderness and intimacy, as opposed to a form of masculinity endowed with breadth and determination (KFSa 1:93). However, both of these forms must enjoy autonomy (KFSa 1:93).

Schlegel’s attention to this theme increases with the onset of the so-called romantic phase of his thought. Under the enthusiasm for the French Revolution, he highlights the importance of freedom and equality within the relationships between men and women. Moreover, in his review of Kant’s *On Perpetual Peace*, he supports the right of women to vote.<sup>14</sup>

The importance that the Schlegel brothers gave to women in their philosophy complemented an (at least apparently) favourable picture in German Romanticism of the emancipation of women: for them, women

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<sup>9</sup> I refer here to the traditional interpretation (dating back to Hegel) of Romanticism as an expression of the new bourgeois individuality.

<sup>10</sup> Adrian Daub, *Uncivil Unions. The Metaphysics of Marriage in German Idealism and Romanticism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Über die Diotima*, in Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* (=KFSa), Vol. 1 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1971), 100.

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Über die weiblichen Charaktere in den Griechischen Dichtern*, KFSa 1:47.

<sup>13</sup> Schlegel, *Über die Diotima*, KFSa 1:97.

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Versuch über den Begriff des Republikanismus*, KFSa 7:17.

would become the favoured subjects of philosophy.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the genres and styles that the authors of Romanticism employed in their works seem particularly appropriate for the inclusion of women in philosophical discussion: novels, reviews and letters were all used to present and discuss philosophy; these works could be more easily read (but also written) by those who, like women, were basically excluded from university,<sup>16</sup> the principal place for writing philosophical systems. Women, in fact, were the primary audience for novels,<sup>17</sup> and letters were their privileged means of written expression.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the romantic theory of philosophical exposition was therefore particularly suited to the involvement of women.

Romantic metaphysics and the philosophy of nature also seemed to be heading in the direction of a justification for the equality and emancipation of women. There are two ways in which this is possible. The first way (1) has been highlighted by Reill:<sup>19</sup> romantic philosophy recognises the intrinsic duality of nature, and consequently, any female–male separation is to be viewed as an essential polarity in the development of nature. However, as Stone points out,<sup>20</sup> this view involves the risk of one of the two poles being considered as predominant over the other pole.

The second way in which German Romanticism can be interpreted as being favourably inclined toward the emancipation of women is (2) through its critique of identity. Although the first option mentioned above emphasises the intrinsic duality of being, the second option more radically recognises difference as the ontological principle of early German romantic

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<sup>15</sup> “I will be bringing all sorts of good things back for *Athenaeum*, among others a letter on philosophy to Madam Veit – but not just to Madam Veit alone, but also to *all* woman. Since the learned scribes in Berlin, as I hear, are intent on *not* understanding us, we are both quite inclined to put our hopes on women,” Friedrich Schlegel to Henriette Herz, 24 August 1798, tr. Doug Stott, last modified 2015, <https://www.carolineschelling.com/letters/volume-1-index/letter-202g/>.

<sup>16</sup> Even if in the nineteenth century women were not officially banned from German universities, they were strongly discouraged from attending lessons; see: Bea Lundt, “Zur Entstehung der Universität als Männerwelt,” in *Geschichte der Mädchen- und Frauenbildung*, Vol 1: *Vom Mittelalter bis zur Aufklärung*, ed. Elke Kleinau and Claudia Opitz (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 1996), 103–118; Beatrix Niemeyer, “Ausschluß oder Ausgrenzung? Frauen im Umkreis der Universitäten im 18. Jahrhundert,” in *Geschichte*, ed. Kleinau and Opitz, 275–294.

<sup>17</sup> Ursula A. J. Becher, “Lektürepräferenzen und Lesepraktiken von Frauen im 18. Jahrhundert,” *Aufklärung* 6, no. 1 (1992): 27–42.

<sup>18</sup> Elke Frederiksen, “Deutsche Autorinnen im 19. Jahrhundert: Neue kritische Ansätze,” *Colloquia Germanica* 14, no. 2 (1981): 97–113.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Hanns Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 221–231.

<sup>20</sup> Alison Stone, *Nature, Ethics and Gender in German Romanticism and Idealism* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 187–191.



philosophizing. Following Schlegel's philosophy of nature, even when we have the perception of an object that simply exists in a stable state and without variation, this representation is still the result of a continuous struggle, a continuous process of the occupation of a space and the production of a point of collision between forces to which we attribute the static principle of identity. For Schlegel, these are forces (of course, there are not just two forces, but many) that collide and intermingle, and they lead to a contradiction for anyone wishing to designate them or for anyone seeking to stabilise them in expressions that block the movement of the underlying forces, reducing them to a fixed identity.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, this does not mean that there is no sexual identity for romantic philosophers; rather, the identities of the masculine and feminine are constructions and are not at all immediate objects. This approach underpins Friedrich Schlegel's premise in which he argues that they are only superficial peculiarities.<sup>22</sup> Schleiermacher's position is also compatible, insofar as he describes an "original gender" (he also calls it "the artist") that is constituted by the union of genders and that overcomes the male–female separation: Thandeka designates this the "proto-gender," an original state of the 'I'.<sup>23</sup>

However, the idea that the "feminine" and the "masculine" are the result of a construction was not fully exploited by the Romantic philosophers. The innovative reflections of Romanticism on gender difference are in fact the story of an aborted potential. Nevertheless, the idea that gender difference is a social construction and a result of a continuous performance is advocated by contemporary philosophers like Judith Butler.<sup>24</sup> One of the origins of this idea could be rediscovered in Romanticism because of the analyses of Schleiermacher and Friedrich Schlegel on gender difference and on the construction of identity (2). The first perspective (1) above, on the contrary, finds in Romanticism the beginning of a philosophical position that leads to the so-called 'feminism of difference', as explained for example by Luce Irigaray,<sup>25</sup> whose feminist philosophy can be considered opposed to that

<sup>21</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenäum-Fragmente*, KFSa 2:243, 412.

<sup>22</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Über die Philosophie. An Dorothea*, KFSa 8:45.

<sup>23</sup> Thandeka, "Schleiermacher, Feminism, and Liberation Theologies: a Key", in: *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 287–305.

<sup>24</sup> "Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed." Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 24–25.

<sup>25</sup> Again, see: Stone, *Nature, Ethics and Gender*, 188f. and Reill, *Vitalizing*, 221–231.

of Butler; in any case, both positions find affinities in the romantic vision of gender difference.

Finally, the romantic theory of philosophical exposition – the philosophical importance of the writing of fragments and poetry and the refusal to conceive of philosophy as a system – could (and still can) allow us to include in the philosophical canon works that were written by subjects (women) who, even for trivially sociological reasons, did not adopt philosophical system-building as their genre.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, however, the equality admired by the romantics, the freedom in the affective realm and the inclusion of women in symphilosophical discussions, obscures a much more complicated and restrictive condition experienced by women, not to mention the conservative perspective held by many of the male romantic philosophers. Firstly, the women in early German romanticism were not always equally recognised as authors or translators.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, it was commonly accepted that men and women should receive two different educations, as Schleiermacher – who nevertheless admired some women philosophers of his time (Henriette Herz, among others)<sup>28</sup> – claimed in his *Catechism of Reason for Noble Women*, published as fragment number 364 in the *Athenaeum*, or as Clemens Brentano did in letters to his sister Bettina von Arnim.<sup>29</sup> Thirdly, the general acceptance by the male philosophers of Romanticism that women should be excluded from the political reflection and activity. Despite Friedrich Schlegel's apparent liberality, in fact, and despite his initial idea that women should vote, he later states that “a woman is a domestic being” (KFSa 8: 42)

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<sup>26</sup> “non-philosophical status is assigned to poetry, novels, and letters [...] But we must recognize that this designation is not because they are somehow unphilosophical in themselves, nor is it simply because these forms would be unsuitable for presentation of the sort of work done within the theories of the dominant model [...] These types of form seem to be at odds with the dominant model because in their own way they can be seen to uphold the importance of, or give validity to, certain moral concerns that are devalued on the dominant model. For example, they are open to the possibilities of being more intimate, more personal, indeed they may not only include the emotions of the author, but involve them on the part of the reader. What we must recognize is that what may appear to be ‘the’ philosophical genre is in fact just one possibility,” Catherine Villanueva Gardner, *Women Philosophers: Genre and the Boundaries of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2018 2 ed.), 9–10.

<sup>27</sup> On this, see: Alison Stone, Giulia Valpione, “Romanticism and Idealism,” in *Oxford Handbook of Women in 19th Century Philosophy in the German Tradition*, ed. Dalia Nassar and Kristin Gjesdal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>28</sup> Ulrike Wagner, “Schleiermacher's *Geselligkeit*, Henriette Herz, and the ‘Convivial Turn’,” in *Conviviality at the Crossroads. The Poetics and Politics of Everyday Encounters*, eds. Oscar Hemer, Maja Povrzanović Frykman and Per-Markku Ristilampi (Cham: Palgrave, 2020), 65–87.

<sup>29</sup> See §3 of this article.

excluded from the political sphere.<sup>30</sup> Even Novalis, in his *Faith and Love*, excludes women from politics.<sup>31</sup>

Certainly, the male philosophers of Romanticism accepted women as interlocutors of symphilosophical discussions: Novalis, even if he excludes women from political activity, transfigures his beloved Sophie into the image and incarnation of the idea of philosophy.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, they were still far from the idea that men and women should play equal roles in society and in particular from the idea that women could have a political relevance in the public sphere. A role that Bettina von Arnim, on the contrary, demanded.

### 3. Bettina von Arnim and the French Revolution

The household of the young Bettina von Arnim was a place where the events and debates taking place in nearby France were closely observed. Clearly, Bettina's readings were influenced by her grandmother Sophie La Roche, with whom she lived after the death of her parents (her mother died in 1793, her father in 1797). The idea that education does not involve the simple imposition of prescriptions, the interest in social change and in the condition of the poor and the idea that the knowledge of nature is a tool for the moral improvement of the human being<sup>33</sup> unite the two women.

Sophie La Roche held intense discussions and was engaged in correspondence with Mirabeau; she often hosted French intellectuals and politicians at her home. Von Arnim therefore had the opportunity to read Mirabeau's letters and Sieyès's, Mercier's and Pétion's works.<sup>34</sup> Her curiosity towards the progressive French thinkers was not welcomed by her brother

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<sup>30</sup> Consistent with his initial idea that the division between genders is a superficial characteristic of human beings, a woman's vocation –that is, the divine voice in us– can indeed lead to the opposite direction from the domestic life (KFSa 8: 43). Nevertheless, Schlegel sees a woman's nature and disposition as binding her to the materiality (and not to the spirituality) of things. Moreover, Schlegel did not consider the possibility that women could live outside the spheres of a married life and of motherhood and he did not at all contemplate the possibility that a woman might refuse the repetitiveness implicit in the role of wife and mother in order to fully dedicate herself to poetry and philosophy: he simply suggests a way for her to approach the absolute while still carrying out her domestic tasks.

<sup>31</sup> "The queen does not have a political, but a domestic sphere of influence," Novalis, *Glaube und Liebe*, in Novalis, *Schriften* (=HKA), vol. 2, eds. Richard Samuel, Hans-Joachim Mähl and Gerhard Schulz (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981), 491, 27.

<sup>32</sup> See for example his letter to Friedrich Schlegel, 8 July 1796, HKA 4, 188.

<sup>33</sup> All these topics are explored in La Roche's novels: *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*, 2 voll. (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1771), last modified 2020, <http://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11260917-9> and in *Rosalie und Cleberg auf dem Lande*, (Offenbach: Weiß und Breda, 1791), last modified 2009, <http://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10113503-6>.

<sup>34</sup> Bettina von Arnim, *Clemens Brentano's Frühlingskranz*, AWB 1:22.

Clemens Brentano (AWB 1:80). He feared that these writings might divert her from texts and activities that were more suitable for a young girl, such as the study of foreign languages or playing the piano. Bettina von Armin stubbornly continued to devote her attention to the revolutionary movements (AWB 1:96), and her readings were not only the source of her intellectual vivacity but also of her personality, as well as her aversion to any image of women that relegated them to merely the role of mother and housewife with no culture and no political voice. From Sieyès she learned the vocabulary of modern contractualism and from Mercier she took the idea that women should play a key role in the political community. For Mercier, in fact, women (or, better, mothers) must educate their children (or, again, their sons) to civil values, and they thus constitute a bridge between the private and the public and political domain.<sup>35</sup> For the French thinker, although women do not therefore play a political role in the public sphere, they are not simply relegated to a totally apolitical sphere either. The transformation of the role of women in society also materialised during the French Revolution, in which the movements of French women demanded the right to education, work, a fair wage, divorce and the abolition of the dowry.<sup>36</sup>

These philosophers and the historical events influenced both von Arnim's philosophy and her imagination, as is the case with many other German writers of her time.<sup>37</sup> They interpreted the French Revolution as a historical manifestation of a process towards the freedom and autonomy of the individual.<sup>38</sup> Bettina was no exception: the French Revolution impressed and ignited a rebellious attitude in her.

She wanted to rebel against the conventions of good manners, which hindered her will and the free expression of the human being (AWB 1:212).

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<sup>35</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *L'An 2440. Rêve s'il en fût jamais* (Londre, 1771), in particular 339, last modified 20 January 2014, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6571684d>. On this: Annie K. Smart, *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press), 61–83.

<sup>36</sup> After initial transformations in favour of women's emancipation, France returned to much more conservative positions: for example, the repressive decrees of year III, which effectively prohibited the political action of women. On this: Suzanne Deasan, "Recent Historiography on the French Revolution and Gender," *Journal of Social History* 52, no. 3 (Spring 2019): 566–574.

<sup>37</sup> On this, see: Dagmar von Hoff, "Dramatische Weiblichkeitsmuster zur Zeit der Französischen Revolution. Dramen von deutschsprachigen Autorinnen um 1800," in *Die Marseillaise der Weiber: Frauen, die Französische Revolution und ihre Rezeption*, ed. Inge Stephan, Sigrid Weigel and Ruth Henry (Hamburg: Argument-Verlag, 1989), 74–88.

<sup>38</sup> On this: George Peabody Gooch, *Germany and the French Revolution* (London: Longmans, 1920); Frederick C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Rudiger Safranski, *Romanticism: A German Affaire*, trans. Robert E. Goodwin (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014).

An awareness of the emancipatory process of women (“Vivat – a new era is coming”)<sup>39</sup> was the source of both the attitudes concerning more superficial aspects of women’s lives—such as the joy of having bought trousers instead of a much more feminine skirt (AWB 2:19)—and the claim of women’s rationality was sufficiently elevated to be the subject (and not only the object) of philosophical reflection.

For von Arnim, a woman is not only, at best, a writer of literary works in which a philosophical position may be found among the narrated events, or merely the author of letters in which speculation is mixed with the narration of everyday life. In fact, in her *This Book Belongs to the King*, a woman is associated with the figure of Socrates: for her, the rational human being, the logically impeccable mind, or the inquisitor seeking truth can be represented as a woman.<sup>40</sup> Bettina von Arnim associated the Socratic approach with Katharina Elisabeth Goethe, mother of Johann Wolfgang Goethe and also called “Frau Rat”,<sup>41</sup> the protagonist of the second part of *This Book Belongs to the King*, which is entitled “Socratic of Frau Rat”. Not surprisingly, during a dialogue in this volume Goethe’s mother has to defend herself against her interlocutors who disregard the female intellect.<sup>42</sup>

Bettina von Arnim expressed a sincere admiration for the French revolutionary uprisings. In the imaginary correspondence with Frau Rat (published in *Goethe’s Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde*), her admiration (if not a real fascination) for Napoleon is also evident.<sup>43</sup> This admiration is dictated

<sup>39</sup> von Arnim, *Goethe’s Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde*, AWB 2:19.

<sup>40</sup> As Genevieve Lloyd (following Sarah Kofman’s reflections in: *Socrates: Fictions of a Philosopher*) clearly points out, this image of Socrates as an apogee of rational reflection opposed to the more sentimental feminine is much more indebted to the philosophers who contributed to the construction of this image than to Socrates himself (Genevieve Lloyd, “Introduction,” 7). It is in fact Lloyd’s central thesis that “the maleness of reason ... [is] a metaphorical construct.” Genevieve Lloyd, *The Male of Reason* (London: Routledge, 1993, 2 ed.), viii. On the idea that the “speaking-positions” in philosophical works are not gender-neutral, but “incorporate assumptions of maleness” (Genevieve Lloyd, “Feminism in History of Philosophy. Appropriating the Past,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy*, ed. Miranda Fricker and Jennifer Hornsby [Cambridge: Cambridge UP], 245–263, here: 246) also see: Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian T. Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

<sup>41</sup> On the relationship between Goethe’s mother and Bettina von Arnim: Ulrike Prokop, “Die Freundschaft zwischen Katharina Elisabeth Goethe und Bettina Brentano – Aspekte weiblicher Tradition,” in *Frauenfreundschaft – Männerfreundschaft. Literarische Diskurse im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Barbara Becker-Cantarino and Wolfram Mauser (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991), 237–277.

<sup>42</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, ABW 3:246.

<sup>43</sup> On this and for an overview on the critical reception of Napoleon imagery by German writers during the *Vormärz* period: Kathleen M. Hallihan, “Following Bonaparte: Images of Napoleon in the Works of Bettina von Arnim,” *Colloquia Germanica* 36, no. 2 (2003), 97–117.

by the relevance in Bettina's philosophy (at least in her early years) for the resolve of individuals (*Entschluß*) and their ability to incite changes in history and "a joyful rush through all lifelines."<sup>44</sup> A strength also manifested in the French Revolution. The philosopher hoped that Napoleon could be the personification of the French revolutionary uprisings with respect to the burgeoning affirmation of freedom and self-determination. Napoleon had fascinated the world,<sup>45</sup> but von Arnim was ultimately greatly disappointed by his international politics.

Napoleon presented himself as the liberator of the oppressed people, but in reality he simply undermined the self-determination of the people: for the chains constraining them remained intact.<sup>46</sup> His bloody campaigns for the liberation of the people were useless, staining with blood the throne that the Revolution had broken (AWB 3:194). Like other sovereigns, Napoleon applied the *Staatskunst* or state machinery to oppress the people of Europe: for instance, he did so in the strategy he pursued against the people of Tyrol, who had demanded independence, but were eventually cruelly repressed.

The disillusion towards this charismatic figure who had subjugated Europe drove Bettina away from her early desire for Germany to have a similar hero. Someone whom she hoped would lead to the rebirth of its freedom and republican ideals (AWB 3:190). On the contrary, the politics of Napoleon in his treatment of the uprisings in Tyrol convinced her that to bow down to him would have meant renouncing the ideal of freedom (AWB 3:189).

#### **4. "The Tree of Freedom has no Roots and no Shade": Equality in von Arnim's Philosophy**

Von Arnim's enthusiasm for the French Revolution did not wane over the years, even though her detachment from the development of events in France (particularly since Napoleon's seizure of power) became gradually more perceptible. She saw Napoleon as evidence of a betrayal of the ideals of the Revolution and a perversion of its goals of freedom and equality.

The desire for freedom and equality that first motivated the revolutionaries aroused Bettina's continual enthusiasm, but what they became did not inspire any admiration in her, because they gradually transformed those ideals into formal concepts. Indeed, for her the equality that was theoretically assumed and affirmed in practice by the French

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<sup>44</sup> Von Arnim, *Frühlingskranz*, ABW 1:97.

<sup>45</sup> Bettine von Arnim, *Goethe's*, ABW 2:18.

<sup>46</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:88–89.

Revolution was a simple equality of power (*Macht*).<sup>47</sup> The French proclaimed themselves as brothers, but the equality of strength and power that their concept of equality entailed had led them to war (ABW 3:256). Faced with this condition, Napoleon attempted to bring peace by imposing himself as the sovereign of France, not by virtue of a representative mandate according to the rules established by the constituent power, but by virtue of his own genius (ABW 3:256).

The equality that the Revolution had achieved in France was an equality of strength; it implied that one individual has the same power as another individual: in practice, the state of nature (a state of constant potential war, following the modern theory of natural law) was the result and not only the theoretical presupposition of the French Revolution.<sup>48</sup> This chaotic condition made it possible for Napoleon to assume power: the equality of individuals with regard to their strength that is proclaimed by modern natural law cannot be pacified, except by the genius that prevails on all of them. The Tree of Liberty was planted on this false idea of freedom: “a tree without roots and without shade, with a hat crowned with anger and a shield covered with tyranny” (ABW 3:255). Von Arnim constantly and firmly criticised this concept of equality.

The theme of equality was cherished by Bettina, especially regarding the Jewish question. She was, in fact, particularly connected with the Jewish community. In her letters, she often recounts her relations with its members, and sometimes her correspondents ask her about that culture.<sup>49</sup> She never rejects their requests, and although her religious judgement towards them is harsh,<sup>50</sup> the equality of Jews and Christians remains unquestionable: both must be the beneficiary of human rights (*menschliche Rechte*).<sup>51</sup> The language used here is clearly indebted to the theory of modern natural law but the meaning von Arnim gives to this expression is unusual.

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<sup>47</sup> von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, ABW 3:256.

<sup>48</sup> Summarising the role of equality in modern natural law: both Hobbes' and Rousseau's idea of a state of (potential or actual) war or at least of a permanent instability is based on the logic of individual equality because no one wants to recognise another person as superior and therefore as the holder of a power that allows them to establish a stable social order. Although Bettina was not aware of Hobbes' texts nor do we have evidence of her reading of Rousseau's *Social Contract*, she did have a direct knowledge of Sieyès's and Mercier's works, who made extensive use of the concepts of modern natural law.

<sup>49</sup> On this, see: Claire Baldwin, “Questioning the ‘Jewish Question’: Poetic Philosophy and Politics in ‘Conversations with Demons’,” in *Bettina Brentano-von Arnim. Gender and Politics*, ed. Elke P. Frederiksen and Katherine R. Goodman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 213–246.

<sup>50</sup> Von Arnim, *Goethe's*, AWB 2:147.

<sup>51</sup> Bettina von Arnim, *Die Gündertode*, ABW 1:616.

The equality between Christians and Jews is sustained by von Arnim clearly in a letter to her friend Karoline von Günderrode, in which von Arnim had praised a school where Jewish children and Christians were educated together. Consequently, these children will grow up with an awareness that they enjoy the same human rights. Given the context and in line with what has been analysed so far of von Arnim's political thinking, it can be deduced that this is not a legal status that humans enjoy. In fact, the equality that the philosopher finds among human beings is based on a different paradigm: it is a question of moral equality, i.e. the fact that moral greatness only depends on one's own self (ABW 3:256). It is a question of equality with regard to ethical autonomy and not to strength and powers (as for the French revolutionaries, in von Arnim's interpretation). The theme of autonomy was dear to Bettina and is at the centre of many of her writings. This is particularly the case in a short text *Erfahrungen eines jungen Schweizers im Vogtlande* published in *This Book Belongs to the King*. Here autonomy is related to freedom and self-knowledge: i.e. without self-knowledge, there is no moral autonomy, and therefore no freedom.<sup>52</sup>

However, this idea of equality signifying the capacity of everyone to achieve moral ends requires certain social, political and economic conditions. To be sure, human beings can enjoy the "starry sky" (recalling the Kantian expression) within themselves, but the material conditions in which the moral subject lives determine the possibility or the impossibility of following the direction indicated by those stars: the condition of the possibility of morality does not concern *a priori* practical reason (as it does for Kant), but rather the material conditions under which morality can be developed. Material and sensible needs are a part of the existence of the moral subject. Their corporeity is not a "sinful excrement of nature" (ABW 3:291) that is opposed to spirituality and morality (ABW 3:291): the physical dimension and condition of the subject must be taken into consideration in any reflection on moral philosophy. According to von Arnim: "nature has created a sensible body so that it is pervaded with spirit at every sensation (*Empfindung*)" (ABW 3:278). This is why morality and politics are so closely intertwined: the political community – or, better said, the state – must take responsibility for the realisation of these conditions and guarantee that the basic bodily needs are satisfied. Although moral greatness depends on one's own self, the conditions permitting the individual to be in a position to listen to the voice of morality are the responsibility of the state.

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<sup>52</sup> On this, see, again: Alison Stone, Giulia Valpione, "Romanticism and Idealism."



It is up to the state to grant women an alternative for their survival, and not force them into cohabitation with men, with whom they are not bound by the constraints of marriage nor by any sentimental relationships (ABW 3:336): they must be allowed to and helped in finding an economic autonomy. Furthermore, it is up to the state to provide people with sustenance and access to primary goods so that nobody is forced to steal or beg for alms in order to survive (ABW 3:286, 337, 357) and so that people will have the necessary time and energy to discover their moral vocation. For example, the poor cannot even afford the time for self-analysis (*Selbstprüfung*) that is required by some religious communities (ABW 3:348). In addition, it is the duty of the state not simply to contribute to their subsistence through (the more or less regular) payment of small amounts of money, or through free food and clothing, but its responsibility is to also ensure that individuals have the means to escape from poverty (ABW 3:356). Finally, the state authorities must always guarantee that the production costs and wages of the workers who manufacture a product are in proportion to the market price of the product itself in order to enable the workers to purchase things: it must ensure that the profits of traders and industry owners are not disproportionate to the salaries of the workers (ABW 3:355). If this is not done, human beings will become deaf to the voice of morality resounding within them, and the resulting imbalance between the forces and attitudes in their soul might drive them to commit crimes. In this case, however, it is the state that is guilty of the crime because it did not guarantee the conditions granting people the freedom to act morally, but bound them instead with the chains of ignorance and necessity (ABW 3:200–211).

The equality between human beings, therefore, is not based on the idea that they are naturally equal in strength and power. Jews and Christians are equal not because each community is made up of abstract individuals stripped of peculiarities but because everyone has the capacity for moral self-determination. The understanding of this equality does not pass through a rational form of abstraction that reduces each human being to an atom devoid of any quality and only provided with a will,<sup>53</sup> but through a feeling that surpasses all their differences. Equality concerns freedom, a harmony with itself and with other human beings and nature (ABW 3:239–240, 274). This is not just a question of the individual autonomy of a single human being separate from others, nor is it an ascetic idea of the pursuit of morality: “you are not an isolated life, even if all the life that is touched in you depends on

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<sup>53</sup> As it is for modern contractualism. See, for example: Sieyès, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers État?*, 168–170.

you.”<sup>54</sup> On the contrary, autonomy, equality and freedom are given in a social and economic context that is favourable to it; it promotes a state that remains vigilant in order to ensure that these favourable conditions are met. The moral action of each individual is the result of a set of relationships in which this individual is placed: it is the community of affiliates that allows or does not allow individuals to act morally.

### 5. The Romantic Conception of Natural Law

The importance of this equality – that is to be understood as moral autonomy – also lies at the basis of Bettina’s strong support for the self-determination of the people. The nascent German public opinion at that time was shaken by the struggle for independence in Tyrol, the *Volksaufstand* of 1809. After much bloodshed, Tyrol remained annexed to the Kingdom of Bavaria (from which it had wanted to secede) under French aegis, and under the indifference of the other European powers, particularly Austria.<sup>55</sup> Supporting equality has nothing to do with abstract individualism that separates human beings and keeps them under the permanent threat of civil war because they have all the same power. Rather, it involves sharing in the desire for autonomy, leading to groups and communities that strive for self-determination: be it the Tyroleans who want to secede from the Kingdom of Bavaria or a small community of poor people described by Bettina, a community which the central police were not allowed to enter.<sup>56</sup>

However, the political vocabulary used by Bettina might be misunderstood. Even in discussions of the conditions in Tyrol, she employed an expression that is typical of modern political science but she changed its meaning: ‘natural law’ (*Naturrecht*). This is not surprising, because the transformation of the meaning of the term *Naturrecht* was not new to the Romantic circle. In particular, Friedrich Schlegel consciously carried out this transformation: to him, natural law is the same as historical law because there

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<sup>54</sup> Von Arnim, *Die Gunderode*, AWB 1:699.

<sup>55</sup> Von Arnim, *Goethe’s*, AWB 2:319. The rebellion in Tyrol was one of those wars of liberation that were supported by various philosophers and intellectuals in Germany. Just think of Fichte (in his *Addresses to the German Nation*), Arndt (*Die deutsche Wehrmannschaft*) and Kleist (*Die Hermannsschlacht*). On this and on the intricate relationship between wars of liberation and counter-revolution, I refer to the still excellent: Domenico Losurdo, “Fichte, la resistenza antinapoleonica e la filosofia classica tedesca,” *Studi storici* 24, no. 1/2 (January – June, 1983), 189–216.

<sup>56</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, ABW 3:366.

is no phase (whether logical or historical) in the evolution of a law that is not subject to transformation.<sup>57</sup>

Even von Arnim, in her deployment of the lexicon of natural law, did not consider it as a more or less peaceful state that served as the founding stage towards the affirmation of a civil state. Instead of characterizing it in historical terms, as Schlegel does, *Naturrecht* for her constitutes a constant in the relations between human beings. Natural law, in an original way, concerns our effective ability to relate to other people: it is the feeling that overcomes the separation, it makes us experience other people and understand their actions and accept their wishes and desires. It does not concern the feeling of belonging to a particular national identity, or in the sense of belonging to a specific community. Natural law exists in the soul of anyone who understands the desire of the Tyroleans for autonomy and who supports them despite not belonging to their identity – “natural law predominates in him”, writes von Arnim of a piano teacher: this means he will be able to empathize with the Tyrolean cause.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, natural law guarantees an identification (*sich fühlen*) with the criminal, with someone who commits a crime not out of an intrinsic evil, but for a simple lack of alternatives, given his lack of self-awareness and freedom.<sup>59</sup> Bettina’s conception of natural right is in no way equal to the set of Hobbes’ or Rousseau’s rational rules explained respectively in the *Leviathan* and in *The Social Contract*. In particular, she distances herself from the idea that it should decree the separation between individuals or the annihilation of their relationships. On the contrary, *Naturrecht* here is a feeling that is similar to love, since it unites and ties human beings together. It is a feeling so innate that it is comparable to an instinct<sup>60</sup> towards the communion with the beloved (AWB 2:509), to a spiritual form of love (*Geistesliebe*) that weaves kinship between spirits –as well as the forces of nature.<sup>61</sup> If *Naturrecht* has to be used as the basis for undertaking a study of human relationships in civil society, then abstract individuality has to be excluded. The starting point is the feeling of belonging to a whole,<sup>62</sup> and not selfishness or the needs of the individual: the whole comes before its parts. This way, the meaning given by

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<sup>57</sup> On this, see: Giulia Valpione, “*Bildung* et vie dans la philosophie politique de Friedrich Schlegel,” in *L’Homme et la nature dans le Romantisme allemand. Connaissance, politique et esthétique*, ed. Giulia Valpione (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2021, forthcoming), 147–162.

<sup>58</sup> Von Arnim, *Goethe’s*, AWB 2:257–258.

<sup>59</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:245.

<sup>60</sup> Von Arnim, *Goethe’s*, AWB 2:509.

<sup>61</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:268.

<sup>62</sup> Von Arnim, *Goethe’s*, AWB 2:453; Von Arnim, *Die Gündertode*, AWB 1:527.

Bettina to the expression “natural law” is quite different from that given by modern contractualism.

The criticism directed at abstract individualism, which underpins the modern science of law both in the *Code Napoléon* and the *Allgemeines Landrecht* (which was gradually introduced into Prussia from 1794 onwards and which was destined to change and influence the whole German jurisdiction),<sup>63</sup> is one of the main elements of the romantic criticism of modern contractualism. Compared with the atomistic view in which an individual is treated in isolation, Friedrich Schlegel suggested focusing on what constitutes the heart of politics itself, that is, on the relationship.<sup>64</sup> The relationship between the members of a community precedes the state, and the objective of political philosophy should not be a search for fundamental laws of an original and founding balance. Politics should govern the movement and life of the political body, and therefore always maintains its own vital constituent force.<sup>65</sup> This was the prerequisite for Schlegel’s choice not to focus on an isolated individual, but on his or her simpler relationships that exist before and after the constitution of the state. However, beginning in 1804, during his lectures in Cologne, he began with the philosophical–political analysis of another central relationship: that of the married couple (*Ehe*). Therefore, although the romantic philosopher aims at overcoming all individualist logic, he now runs the risk of falling into the conservative image of a political community that is based on marriage and the family. The importance of the married couple is also present in Novalis’s political philosophy. As mentioned above, Novalis places the king and queen – the royal couple – as joint sovereigns of the state and not merely the king.

Undeniably, in some passages of von Arnim’s works she also recognises the value of marriage. On the one hand, she admits that the *Ehe* is one of the basic principles of the universe: a vision derived from her *Philosophy of Nature*, in which nature is intrinsically twofold.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, she argues that the institution of marriage isolates a woman inside the home and hinders her from developing her freedom.

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<sup>63</sup> Ernst Rudolf Hueber, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte seit 1789*, Vol. 1: *Reform und Restauration 1789 bis 1830* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1957 2 ed.), in particular page 106. Reinhart Koselleck, *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution. Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791 bis 1848* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1975), 23–77.

<sup>64</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Transzendentalphilosophie*, KFSÄ 12:45.

<sup>65</sup> See Giulia Valpione, “Schlegel’s Incomprehensibility and Life: From Literature to Politics”, in *Romanticism, Philosophy, and Literature*, ed. Michael N. Forster and Lina Steiner (New-York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 193–215.

<sup>66</sup> She uses this principle to harshly criticise the idea that only the male intellect exists: for von Arnim, the spirit of the world needs both the male and female intellect.

A comparison with Schlegel and Novalis reveals the difference between von Arnim and the other members of Early German Romanticism. For Bettina von Arnim, a civil union is neither the result of a contract stipulated between equals nor the result of a genealogical development beginning with the institution of the couple (as it was for Schlegel).<sup>67</sup> Rather, von Arnim views the community emerging through natural right, a community that allows us to experience another person and not just to see them as an object. It is a widespread feeling that is present in both men and women. It precedes and overcomes these separations by putting them at the centre of the political reflections. It is not focused on what divides us from others, but on what spontaneously brings us closer without leading to an impulse towards a political or cultural identity. It is not simply the love for another person – as it is with a married couple – but the feeling that allows us to connect with other people.

## 6. The Government of the Self and Others

The originality of Bettina von Arnim's philosophical–political approach and her distance from modern *Naturrecht* are also present in her conception of the law. The formality and abstractness of laws were key concepts of modern contractualism and made them attractive to the European Enlightenment.<sup>68</sup> The aim of modern *ius naturale* was to achieve a peaceful state in which civil wars and power struggles were made impossible through a science of politics that was valid everywhere and under all conditions.<sup>69</sup> To do this, however, it was necessary to abstract from the customs and different power relations that already existed and to treat the human community as a mathematician would treat geometric figures.<sup>70</sup> Just as Cartesian geometry does not take into consideration the conditions in which a square is placed in order to calculate its area (for example, if it moves or not or if it is adjacent to other figures), similarly, modern contractualism does not take into consideration the features of either a particular community or individual subjects in order to establish the basic rules of their coexistence. It does not matter whether you are a landowner or a craftsman or whether you are intelligent, strong or impetuous, nor does political weight you inherited from your ancestors matter: human beings are considered first of all in order to build a universal

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<sup>67</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über Universalgeschichte*, KFS 14:6.

<sup>68</sup> Franz Wieacker, *A History of Private Law in Europe, with Particular Reference to Germany*, trans. Tony Weir, foreword by Reinhard Zimmermann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

<sup>69</sup> See Wieacker, *A History of Private Law*.

<sup>70</sup> See Hobbes' *On Man*, and in particular: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Vol. 2: *The English and Latin Texts (i)*, ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), 56, 124.

anthropology and to establish a political science in possession of the rules of civil society.<sup>71</sup> These rules serve to mark a clear boundary between what is granted to an individual and what is not granted, placing him or her in a realm beyond whose borders it is forbidden to act.<sup>72</sup>

Von Arnim labelled the huge importance attributed to the law ‘despotism’: a “Gesetzes-Despotie der Rechtsform”.<sup>73</sup> An oppression of the subject through the law, which binds and suffocates the human sense (*Menschensinn*) making the human being a slave (AWB 3:221). According to von Arnim, obedience to the formal law (even if it is a rational law, which *from the transcendental point of view*, corresponds to the principle of autonomy) is a sign of the absence of freedom. The formal law is imposed heteronomously, constraining the human impulse to act within a binary logic of what is allowed/banned and that is imposed on the subject from above: the subject (which not only consists of his or her rationality) must adapt to the law, which is in no way influenced by him or her.<sup>74</sup> The link between law and action is instead indissoluble in nature, where life governs itself:

What are your laws and systems compared with a bird that knows how to build its nest and fills the warm summer nights with songs? Or compared with a flower, or in comparison with the world that forms in and around a flowering tree? (AWB 3:51)

There is a link between civil laws and the laws of natural phenomena: the former must not eradicate the latter since the latter tend towards harmony (AWB 3:51). Harmony among human beings and wisdom are not opposed to nature, but must follow its harmonious path (AWB 3:51). The natural desires and the impulses to act must be indulged and, if necessary, moderated, but in any case, they must be recognised as elements intrinsic to human beings: they must not be eradicated by formal rationality. Although society has built for them only prisons and has established the police to control and censure them (AWB 3:51), they can bring harmony and freedom. Taking up a recurrent image from the very beginning of the European tradition of political philosophy, von Arnim compares the community of

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<sup>71</sup> “A law of nature, (*Lex naturalis*,) is a Precept, or generall Rule, found out by Reason”, Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 198 (chap. 14).

<sup>72</sup> “For the use of Laws ... is not to bind the People from all voluntary actions; but to direct and keep them in such a motion, as not to hurt themselves by their own impetuous desires, rashness, or indiscretion; as Hedges are set, not to stop Travellers, but to keep them in the way”, Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 540.

<sup>73</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:229.

<sup>74</sup> Following Pierre Macherey, this is the difference between laws and norms: Pierre Macherey, *Le Sujet des normes* (Paris: Amsterdam, 2014).

human beings with the crew of a ship that has to sail through stormy waves. Her interpretation of this metaphor testifies to her inclusion in German romanticism (which does not place nature and freedom in two separate domains), because for her the rudder of the ship is not a human being but nature itself:

If you were allowed the voice of nature to be your helmsman, you would not be shipwrecked! She does not sit on a sandbank of the law-despotism of the legal form, of the superstition in the old system; she steers carefree between the waves of anger of arrogance, envy, lust for power and the insulted ambition of secret revenge, of tyrannical egotism. (AWB 3:229)

Nature here is understood as human nature but not as an immediate fact; rather, it is the result of a discovery of the self and of a path towards the core of human beings: in order to reach the truth of man and woman, one must undertake a path of knowledge of the 'I' and of the nature that surrounds us. For Bettina von Arnim, unconsciousness and ignorance are, in fact, a prison from which it is possible to free oneself only through knowledge.<sup>75</sup> the nature of human beings is a goal to which one must be educated.

The concept of nature that should stand at the helm of the ship of the community of human beings is therefore rediscovered nature.<sup>76</sup> It is mediated through the knowledge that human beings have of themselves and through their self-governance or self-government –not through ascetic practices or transformations of the self, but through science.<sup>77</sup> Through knowledge, following von Arnim, human beings move away from criminal behaviour: the discovery of the truth regarding the self modifies one's actions. Self-knowledge allows us to discover our freedom from the epistemological point of view, but at the same time, it changes our behaviour towards harmony with ourselves, with our own nature, that is, with freedom.<sup>78</sup> For this reason, self-knowledge not only serves to know one's own autonomy, but it is what

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<sup>75</sup> Von Arnim, *Goethe's*, AWB 2:161.

<sup>76</sup> Here there is a connection with Rousseau's philosophy. This similarity must not, however, overshadow Bettina's criticism of the modern contractualism to which Rousseau adheres.

<sup>77</sup> This tradition of ancient philosophy has been well analysed in Michel Foucault's latest works, in particular: *Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Frédéric Gros, François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana and Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2017); *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*, ed. Frédéric Gros, François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana and Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave 2005); *The Government of Self and Others. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave, 2010).

<sup>78</sup> Von Arnim, *Günderode*, AWB 1:705–706.

everyone is born for<sup>79</sup> because through it we exercise freedom, which involves the possibility of forming the self (*sich bilden*) in the direction dictated by our nature. Through self-knowledge, a subject strengthens her own will (AWB 3:198), she discovers her own *Lebenskeim* (AWB 3:275) and her own principle of harmony that is innately placed in us. Through self-knowledge, therefore, one allows the voice of nature to speak, which thus becomes the *Herr* of our soul and drives away evil and the disharmony between our forces (AWB 3:230): she who acts against the good has not only given in to evil, but has renounced herself (AWB 3:202).

Reflection on the self requires the highest courage, necessary also to have the strength to be that self that is reached by such knowledge,<sup>80</sup> and it is precisely this courage that is necessary for the helmsman of the ship, who cannot impose his own laws on the waters and waves with the pretension of their rationality and universality, but must adapt to the conditions he faces – “the Lord is like the subject ... both are the wretched slaves of chance”<sup>81</sup> – towards the direction that he sets. In order to understand in which direction to navigate to, it is useful to take into consideration the criticism that von Arnim addressed to the state that does not care about the criminals living in its territory. In her research in the Vogtland,<sup>82</sup> the philosopher underlined that the only measures taken by the state so far consist of (insufficient) subsidies in order to avoid crimes in the poorest part of the community, which, in no way, help those who receive them.<sup>83</sup> It consolidates a legitimate economic disparity, which however hides a real abuse and theft against the poor (AWB 3:52–53). What needs to be done in order to help the poor in the community – whose presence indicates the distance of *the whole* community from freedom (AWB 3:335) – and to avoid the repetition of crimes is to approach individual criminals not by locking them in prison but by trying to offer them a chance of rehabilitation. This should not only imply the study of science (AWB 3:339–240), which allows us to know nature and our role in it, but also to relate to each criminal as if we were their second I or ego (AWB 3:227). Not by judging them from the towers of virtue erected by a moral law that is impossible to satisfy (AWB 3:249), but by trying to help them to develop their own strength and to discover their nature (AWB 3:227).

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<sup>79</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:212.

<sup>80</sup> Von Arnim, *Günderode*, AWB 1:662.

<sup>81</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:34.

<sup>82</sup> Becker-Cantarino defines this research by Bettina von Arnim as one of the first examples of empirical and qualitative social research: Becker-Cantarino, *Bettina von Arnim Handbuch*, 413.

<sup>83</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:367.



Indeed, a further clue for understanding the direction that the human community must take in this navigation is the importance ascribed to *Bildung* or education in von Arnim's philosophy. In the correspondence with her friend Karoline von Günderode, von Arnim criticises education and culture as a collection of prescriptions and catechisms,<sup>84</sup> as well as criticising those philosophers who want to reduce nature to a succession of mathematical formulas and machine models (AWB 1:308). Instead, von Arnim and Günderode envisage a form of *Bildung* that encourages curiosity and the full exercise of the subject's forces.

Another indication is Bettina von Arnim's criticism of that political science in which the state is represented as a machine.<sup>85</sup> In mechanistic science, the natural forces become sterile and inactive, and the world is reduced to an automaton that must receive the first impulse to act from the outside because it is devoid of any vital spark that would allow it to provoke its own movement.<sup>86</sup> This is a central theme of German Romanticism: in Novalis we find the example of how mechanistic political science has transformed the state into a mill that grinds itself.<sup>87</sup>

According to Bettina, the vital impulse that allows the community to grow in freedom maintains a constant dialogue between the people and the prince: they are agents of action standing on the same plan constituted by relations, even at a distance.<sup>88</sup> On the contrary, mechanistic political science considers them as two elements opposed to each other where the person representing simply commands the represented. This vision reduces the living *Volksgeist*<sup>89</sup> to a machine, and the tyranny of slavery is affirmed.<sup>90</sup>

Instead, the direction that the ship has to take is towards the free expression of nature – of both the community and individuals. But then the

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<sup>84</sup> Von Arnim, *Günderode*, AWB 1:468.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Carl Schmitt, "Der Staat als Mechanismus bei Hobbes und Descartes," *Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie* 30/37 (1936): 622–632; Carlo Altini, "Ipotesi sul meccanicismo politico. Tra Hobbes e Spinoza," *Filosofia Politica*, 3, (2018): 409–426.

<sup>86</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:324.

<sup>87</sup> Novalis, *Christenheit oder Europa*, HKA 3:515.

<sup>88</sup> The prince "can do nothing without the accordance between his spirit and the senses of the people," Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:268. See: Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "Die Idee vom Volkskönig. Zu Bettina von Arnims Transformation romantischer Konzepte in *Dies Buch gehört dem König*," in *Einheit der Romantik? Zur Transformation frühromantischer Konzepte im 19. Jahrhundert*, eds. Dirk von Petersdorff and Bernd Auerochs (Paderborn: Schöningh 2009), 67–80.

<sup>89</sup> For an introduction to the concept 'Volksgeist' in those years: Karin Raude, "Jacob Grimm und der 'Volksgeist'," in *Romantik und Recht. Recht und Sprache, Rechtsfälle und Gerechtigkeit*, ed. Antje Arnold and Walter Pape (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 15–35.

<sup>90</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:170.

problem arises – a problem present in the German *Aufklärung*<sup>91</sup>: how can we educate people to be free? How can the prince guide his subjects towards freedom if the imposition of an action or a concept (even that of freedom) clashes with the idea of autonomy? Von Arnim’s answer is the following: “governing a whole country is no different from self-government!”<sup>92</sup> Only those who have already discovered their own seed of life (*Lebenskeim*) can lead others towards their nature and freedom – after all: “Life means to awaken life.”<sup>93</sup> For this reason, every citizen has the potential to know how to govern,<sup>94</sup> although every citizen prefers the prince (*Fürst*) to be in charge (AWB 3:84–85). However, every citizen must govern himself or herself, and toward this end, they must be educated: Bettina explicitly set this as her objective. It was a plan involving King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, Prince Karl von Württemberg and Grand Duke Karl Alexander von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach in a pedagogical path.<sup>95</sup>

Governing is easy, just as it is easy to bring it into harmony with the meaning (*Sinn*) of one’s own nature<sup>96</sup> in order to elevate the spirit (one’s own and that of others) towards its greatest potential development (AWB 3:86). To this end, however, the ruler must provide all citizens with education<sup>97</sup> and needs the support of demagogues (of which the prince is a part and of which he is the leader)<sup>98</sup> who help individuals understand themselves and their connection with nature (AWB 3:274–275). ‘Demagogy’ is the term used by von Arnim, and does not indicate here a class of indoctrinators that prevent the people, in line with Kant’s text on the *Aufklärung*, exiting from the age of self-imposed immaturity.

An almost paradoxical figure is therefore needed to enable the people to attain the age of maturity: someone who teaches (risking imposing him- or herself on the pupil), but at the same time encourages the autonomy of the pupil towards self-government. According to von Arnim, this role must be taken up by the scholar or *Gelehrter*. He or she – “as a free teacher with shared interest” (AWB 3:240) – must educate the people in science and free

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<sup>91</sup> Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?*, in Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor, Introduction by Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11–22.

<sup>92</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:85.

<sup>93</sup> Von Arnim, *Günderode*, AWB 1:467.

<sup>94</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:85.

<sup>95</sup> On this: Ulrike Landfester, *Selbstsorge als Staatskunst. Bettine von Arnims politisches Werk* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), in particular: 146–169.

<sup>96</sup> Von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:86.

<sup>97</sup> Von Arnim, *Frühlingskranz*, AWB 1:125.

<sup>98</sup> “Prince and demagogues one heart and soul in defiance of their persecutors,” von Arnim, *Dies Buch*, AWB 3:273.

individuals from the slavery of ignorance. The demagogues (the prince as well as the intellectuals) will therefore impose neither formal laws that eliminate desire nor doctrines to be repeated, nor litanies to be memorised: doing this would not require the freedom of the demagogues, achieved through knowledge and consequent self-government. Only the one who is free and only the one who governs himself or herself is capable of governing others.

## 7. Conclusion: A Politics of Philosophy

It is now clear that Bettina von Arnim formulated a consistent political philosophy full of links with the tradition of political thought. Her philosophy, however, is not strictly systematic, a fact well illustrated by the genres of her texts: letters, reports of investigations, accounts of the social conditions on one part of the population and dialogues. These presentations or *Darstellungen* are not separate or independent from the content: certainly, Bettina did not choose the systematic exposition reserved for her fellow male university professors, but a genre of exposition that was fully in line with what she expressed and, above all, with what she considered the role of philosophy to be. Von Arnim's objective was not the reconstruction and demonstration of rational principles from which one can deduce what is good and right. Her thought did not claim to construct a theory applicable to different situations regardless of practical and contingent conditions. This exercise of philosophy was the result of von Arnim's own experiences, which she recounted and reflected on in her letters. Furthermore, it was a knowledge rooted in social issues. – Indeed, she was much more interested in investigating the conditions of the poor living on the outskirts of Berlin than in studying, for example, the constitutional principles of the monarchy or republicanism. Hence, von Arnim's philosophy was far from systematic thought, but at the same time, she did not simply write mere descriptions of what she was faced with or what she observed. Her works are rational elaborations in order to determine problems, assessments, and possible avenues in politics: she did not limit herself to verifying the large presence of the poor in the suburbs of Berlin (AWB 3:335), but asserted that this is a sign of the lack of freedom of the whole Berlin area and suggested a direction to be taken to improve their conditions. In this balance between descriptive and normative-prescriptive thinking, von Arnim verified from her idea of freedom that it is not realised in many cases and indicates the possible solutions.

Von Arnim therefore abandoned the systematic form (preferred by male philosophers and professors), and accepted instead the plurality of the

philosophical *Darstellungen* favoured by the German Romantics. At the same time, she did not allow herself to be isolated in a private life in which even the male thinkers of Early German Romanticism would have liked to restrict the women. Her works, reflections and investigations into the conditions of the poor and destitute are inherently political thoughts. It was certainly not, like in the case of the Queen described in Novalis's *Faith and Love*, an occupation that only concerned the private sphere. It is political because it calls into question the relationship between men and women, and the plans for an education of the masses, the role of the state in the economy, and much more. And the very fact that it is a woman who published this text on these topics is a sign of political awareness: it is an intrinsically political fact that here a woman is speaking.

**Translations**  
**Traductions**  
**Traduzioni**  
**Übersetzungen**



# Symphilosophie

*International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism*

## Introduction

“Without these women, romanticism is unimaginable.”<sup>1</sup> This is Jean-Christophe Bailly’s assessment of the women of philosophical romanticism when he published an anthology of the writings of the Early German Romantics entitled, *La Légende dispersée*, in 1976, two years before the publication of *L’Absolu littéraire* by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy. *La Légende dispersée* contains French excerpts from Karoline von Günderrode and Bettina Brentano-von Arnim, who, alongside Caroline Michaelis, Dorothea Veit and Rahel Levin Varnhagen, are designated as “active presences” of the Romantic movement on account of their “uncompromising [...] thought.”<sup>2</sup>

However, the literary and philosophical thought and writings of the women of German Romanticism are today, forty-four years later, still scarcely known. With the following small anthology, we in turn would like to give them a voice – in four languages. The selected texts present the reflections of six of these women extending over four decades, from the year 1794 to the year 1835. That is to say, well beyond the period of “early” Romanticism, which was rather short-lived (generally considered to have lasted about five years, from 1795-1797 to 1800-1802). All the translations in this small selection are new, and some of these texts have never been published before in the Italian, French and English languages. The translations are accompanied by the original source text, which is for the most part presented *en face*, i.e. the original German language text is directly opposite the translation. Hence, the best way to read the following translated and source texts are in a double-page format.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Christophe Bailly, “Introduction” [1976] to *La Légende dispersée. Anthologie du romantisme allemand* (Paris: Christian Bourgois éditeur, 2001), 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> This selection of translations is also presented separately on our journal homepage, immediately opening up in such a double-page *en face* format. Click this link to directly access (and download) it: <https://symphilosophie.com/symphilosophie-2-2020-eng/>

We have also chosen to give a face to these thinkers: each translation is therefore preceded by a portrait of the author of the text, as well as a brief introductory note.

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The anthology opens with the figure of Rahel Varnhagen. Laure Cahen-Maurel wrote the introduction and it is followed by her French translation of some of Varnhagen's letters (and extracts of letters) and diary fragments from the *Buch des Andenkens*, a text published by her husband after Rahel Varnhagen's death in 1834 (Berlin, Duncker und Humblot). As explained in more detail in her introductory note, this new French translation also takes into account the more complete and accurate transcription of the German manuscript made by Hannah Arendt and published in the appendix to her biography of *Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewess* (also in: *Rahel Varnhagen. La vie d'une Juive allemande à l'époque du romantisme*, translated into French by Henri Plard in 1986, and republished in 2016 by Payot & Rivages).

The next figure is Sophie Mereau (née Schubart). The brief preface to her novel *Das Blüthenalter der Empfindung* (1794) has been translated into Italian, English and French (by G. Valpione, D. W. Wood, and L. Cahen-Maurel respectively), and a further short extract from her novel has also been translated into French. A current comprehensive critical edition of Mereau's works is by Katharina von Hammerstein: *Sophie Mereau-Brentano, Liebe und allenthalben Liebe: Werke und autobiographische Schriften in drei Bänden* (Frankfurt, Dtv Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1997). Sophie Mereau's two most representative books: *Das Blüthenalter der Empfindung*, and *Amanda und Eduard* (1797-1803), are also easily accessible online in German. The introductory note to Sophie Mereau is also by Laure Cahen-Maurel.

The next text is from probably the best-known female figure of the Jena Romantic Circle: Caroline Michaelis-Schlegel-Schelling. While specialists often evoke her personal life, we wished to highlight the originality of her thought. The opening pages of the "The Paintings" (*Die Gemälde*) – a dialogue she jointly wrote with August Wilhelm Schlegel, and originally published in the *Athenaeum* in 1799 – are translated into English here with an introductory note, by David W. Wood.

This is followed by "Ramdohr's *Moral Tales*" by Dorothea Veit-Schlegel. This text is a review of Friedrich W. B. Ramdohr's *Moralische Erzählungen*. Her review was also originally published in the *Athenaeum* (in August 1800). The introductory note and translation are by David W. Wood.



Until recently, a less well-known figure of German Romanticism was Karoline von Günderode. Her poem “Eine persische Erzählung” was translated into English by Anna C. Ezekiel, while “Idee der Erde” follows in an Italian translation by Giulia Valpione, who also wrote the introductory note. There exist two critical editions of this poetess and philosopher: the first (which still does not include numerous unpublished texts), was edited by Leopold Hirschberg, *Gesammelte Werke der Karoline von Günderode*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Hirschberg, Goldschmidt-Gabrielli, 1920-1922, 2nd ed. 1980); the second edition by Walter Morgenthaler, *Sämtliche Werke und ausgewählte Studien. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, 3 vols. ed. Walter Morgenthaler (Basel/Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1990-1991), consists of three volumes: the first contains all of Karoline von Günderode’s texts, the second collects her personal notes and variants of the texts contained in the first volume, and the third includes an extensive critical apparatus. For the present small anthology we have chosen to use the Morgenthaler edition.

The image of Karoline von Günderode is a reproduction of an oil portrait by Charlotte von Günderode (1780-1801) from the collections of the Historisches Museum in Frankfurt. We would like to thank the Museum for generously granting us permission to reproduce this work, and Beate Dannhorn for providing us with a quality reproduction.

The anthology closes with Bettina Brentano-von Arnim, and a translation into Italian one of her letters to Goethe (from *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde*, 1835). The translation and introductory note are by Giulia Valpione. For this translation, we consulted the critical edition by Walter Schmitz and Sybille von Steinsdorff (*Werke und Briefe in 4 Bände*, ed. Walter Schmitz and Sybille von Steinsdorff, Frankfurt am Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992).

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There are many other philosophers of romanticism who deserve to be read and studied. This small selection obviously cannot be exhaustive. It above all hopes to encourage future researchers to follow in the footsteps of these female writers, thinkers and poets, with a view to reconstructing their diverse and often largely forgotten intellectual journeys.

Laure Cahen-Maurel  
Giulia Valpione

## Introduzione

“Senza di loro il Romanticismo è inimmaginabile”.<sup>1</sup> Questa è l'importanza che Jean-Christophe Bailly conferisce alle pensatrici e filosofe della *Romantik* quando, nel 1976, pubblica un'antologia di testi del Romanticismo (*La Légende dispersée*), due anni prima de *L'assoluto letterario* di Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe e Jean-Luc Nancy. In *La Légende dispersée* si trovano estratti in francese di Karoline von Günderrode e Bettina Brentano-von Arnim, descritte come delle “presenze attive” (assieme a Caroline Michaelis, Dorothea Veit o ancora Rahel Levin Varnhagen) nel movimento romantico più grazie al loro “pensiero [...] intransigente” che per “delle opere”<sup>2</sup> intese in senso vero e proprio.

L'opera letteraria e filosofica delle donne del Romanticismo Tedesco è ancora attualmente scarsamente conosciuta, dopo più di quarant'anni. Con questa piccola antologia vogliamo dare loro voce. I testi scelti risalgono ad un arco di tempo che si dispiega su quattro decenni, dal 1794 al 1835; ben al di là, quindi, del “Primo” Romanticismo, che copre un arco di tempo molto più breve (circa cinque anni, dal 1795-97 al 1800-1802). Tutte le traduzioni di questa antologia sono originali e molte presentano materiali per la prima volta in italiano, francese e inglese. Inoltre, ciascuna viene trascritta con il testo a fronte in lingua originale tedesca. Per questo, consigliamo di consultare questa sezione di «Symphilosophie» visualizzando due pagine e non singolarmente.<sup>3</sup>

Abbiamo deciso di dare anche un volto, a queste filosofe: ogni traduzione è quindi preceduta da un ritratto della singola autrice, poi brevemente presentata con tre pagine introduttive.

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L'antologia è aperta da Rahel Varnhagen. Ad un'introduzione scritta da Laure Cahen-Maurel segue la traduzione in francese (a cura sempre di Cahen-Maurel) di alcune lettere (o estratti di lettere) e frammenti dal suo diario presente in *Buch des Andenkens* pubblicato dal marito nel 1834 (Berlin, Duncker und Humblot) alla morte di Rahel Varnhagen. Come più lungamente spiegato nel testo introduttivo sull'autrice, la traduzione francese qui pubblicata tiene conto della trascrizione eseguita da Hannah Arendt nella

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Christophe Bailly, «Introduction» [1976] in *La Légende dispersée. Anthologie du romantisme allemand*, Paris, Christian Bourgois éditeur, 2001, p. 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Le traduzioni possono essere consultate anche in un file separato che consente di visualizzarle correttamente con il testo tedesco a fronte. Cliccate su questo link per accedervi direttamente: <https://symphilosophie.com/it/symphilosophie-2-2020-ita/>

biografia a lei consacrata *Rahel Varnhagen. Storia di un'ebrea all'epoca del Romanticismo* (già tradotta in francese da Henri Plard nel 1968 e pubblicata in seconda edizione nel 2016 da Payot & Rivages).

La seconda filosofa a cui lasciamo la parola è Sophie Mereau (nata Schubart), di cui traduciamo (in inglese, in italiano e in francese) le frasi introduttive ed un breve estratto dal suo romanzo *Das Blüthenalter der Empfindung* (1794). Allo stato attuale l'edizione critica maggiormente esaustiva della sua opera è l'edizione di Katharina von Hammerstein: Sophie Mereau-Brentano, *Liebe und allenthalben Liebe: Werke und autobiographische Schriften in drei Bänden* (Frankfurt a. M., Dtv Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1997). I suoi due libri più rilevanti (appunto *Das Blüthenalter der Empfindung* e *Amanda und Eduard*, 1797-1803) sono comunque facilmente consultabili on-line nella loro versione originale.

La breve introduzione all'autrice qui pubblicata è a cura di Laure Cahen-Maurel e le diverse traduzioni sono a cura sua (per la versione francese), David W. Wood (inglese) e Giulia Valpione (italiano).

Successivamente, dedicheremo qualche pagina alla donna probabilmente più conosciuta del Primo Circolo Romantico: Caroline Michaelis-Schlegel-Schelling. Nota agli studiosi per la propria vita affettiva, vogliamo invece sottolineare qui l'originalità del suo pensiero. Pubblichiamo quindi le prime pagine del dialogo scritto con August Wilhelm Schlegel e apparso nell'*Athenaeum* nel 1799: *Die Gemälde (I dipinti)*: sia la traduzione inglese, basata sul testo originale dell'*Athenaeum*, che la nota introduttiva sono a cura di David W. Wood.

Prende poi parola un'altra figura discretamente nota: Dorothea Veit-Schlegel, di cui pubblichiamo qui la recensione alle *Moralische Erzählungen (Novelle Morali)* di Fr. W. B. Ramdohr, originariamente pubblicata nel sesto fascicolo della rivista *Athenaeum* (agosto 1800). Sia l'introduzione che la traduzione sono a cura di David W. Wood.

Certamente meno nota è Karoline von Günderode, di cui pubblichiamo *Eine persische Erzählung* (in lingua inglese, ad opera di Anna C. Ezekiel) e *Idee der Erde* (in una traduzione italiana di Giulia Valpione, che firma anche il testo introduttivo).

Della poetessa e filosofa esistono due edizioni critiche: la prima, priva di molti scritti inediti, è a cura di von Leopold Hirschberg (*Gesammelte Werke der Karoline von Günderode*, 3 voll., hrsg. von Leopold Hirschberg, Berlin, Goldschmidt-Gabrielli, 1920-1922, seconda edizione nel 1980), la seconda è a cura di Walter Morgenthaler (*Sämtliche Werke und ausgewählte Studien. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, 3 voll., hrsg. von Walter Morgenthaler, Basel-Frankfurt a. M., Stroemfeld-Roter Stern, 1990-1991) ed è composta di tre

volumi: nel primo sono pubblicati tutti i testi di G nderrode, nel secondo sono raccolti i suoi appunti e le variazioni dei testi contenuti nel primo volume e nel terzo   consultabile un ricco apparato critico. Per questa antologia abbiamo preferito utilizzare l'edizione critica curata da Morgenthaler.

L'immagine utilizzata di Karoline von G nderrode   la riproduzione di un ritratto a olio realizzato da Charlotte von G nderrode (1780-1801) appartenente alla collezione dell'Historisches Museum di Francoforte. Ringraziamo il Museo per averci concesso la gentile autorizzazione a riprodurre questa opera, cos  come ringraziamo Beate Dannhorn per avercene procurato una riproduzione di alta qualit .

L'antologia si chiude con Bettina Brentano-von Arnim di cui pubblichiamo una delle lettere indirizzate a Goethe contenute in *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* (1835). Per la traduzione (di Giulia Valpione, autrice anche del breve testo introduttivo)   stata consultata l'opera critica a cura di Walter Schmitz e Sybille von Steinsdorff (*Werke und Briefe in 4 B nde*, hrsg. von Walter Schmitz und Sybille von Steinsdorff, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, Frankfurt a. M., 1992).

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Molte altre sarebbero le filosofe del Romanticismo che meriterebbero di essere lette e studiate. Questa antologia non pu  certamente essere esaustiva, ma spera comunque di incentivare la futura ricerca a mettersi sulle tracce di queste scrittrici, pensatrici e poetesse al fine di ricomporre i loro molteplici percorsi intellettuali, per la maggior parte ancora dimenticati.

Laure Cahen-Maurel  
Giulia Valpione

## Introduction

« Sans elles le romantisme est inimaginable<sup>1</sup> ». Telle est l'appréciation que Jean-Christophe Bailly porte sur les femmes du romantisme lorsqu'il fait paraître, en 1976, une anthologie du romantisme allemand, *La Légende dispersée*, deux ans avant la publication de *L'Absolu littéraire* par Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe et Jean-Luc Nancy. *La Légende dispersée* donne des extraits en français de Karoline von Günderrode et Bettina Brentano-von Arnim, désignées, aux côtés de Caroline Michaelis, Dorothea Veit ou encore Rahel Levin Varnhagen, comme des « présences agissantes » du mouvement romantique par leur « pensée [...] intransigeante »<sup>2</sup>.

La pensée et l'œuvre littéraire et philosophique des femmes du romantisme allemand est toutefois, aujourd'hui encore (quarante-quatre ans plus tard), très insuffisamment connue. Par cette petite anthologie, nous voulons, à notre tour, leur donner la parole – en quatre langues. Les textes choisis remontent à 1794 et présentent la réflexion de six d'entre ces femmes sur une période de quatre décennies, jusqu'à l'année 1835. Soit bien au-delà du « premier » romantisme, qui fut de courte durée (cinq années environ, de 1795-1797 à 1800-1802). Toutes les traductions de cette anthologie sont des originaux, et beaucoup d'entre elles livrent pour la première fois des matériaux inédits dans les langues italienne, française et anglaise. De plus, chacune d'elles figure ici avec, en regard, le texte dans la langue originale allemande. Aussi un affichage du document en double page est-il la meilleure façon de lire les traductions qui suivent en même temps que les sources<sup>3</sup>.

Nous avons également choisi de donner un visage à ces penseuses : chaque traduction est ainsi précédée d'un portrait de l'auteure du texte, avant d'être brièvement présentée en deux ou trois pages introductives.

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L'anthologie s'ouvre avec la figure de Rahel Varnhagen. À une introduction écrite par Laure Cahen-Maurel, fait suite la traduction française (effectuée également par ses soins) de quelques lettres (ou extraits de lettres) et fragments de journal intime tirés du *Buch des Andenkens* publié à la mort de

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Christophe Bailly, « Introduction » [1976] à *La Légende dispersée. Anthologie du romantisme allemand*, Paris, Christian Bourgois éditeur, 2001, p. 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Ce choix de textes figure également dans un fichier séparé sur le site web de la revue ; il s'affiche immédiatement en double page à l'ouverture du document. Cliquez sur ce lien pour y accéder directement (et le télécharger) : <https://symphilosophie.com/fr/symphilosophie-2-2020-fr/>

Rahel Varnhagen par son mari, en 1834 (Berlin, Duncker und Humblot). Comme l'explique de façon plus développée le texte introductif concernant cette auteure, la traduction tient également compte de la transcription plus complète effectuée par Hannah Arendt et publiée par elle en appendice de la biographie qu'elle a consacrée à Rahel Varnhagen : *Rahel Varnhagen. Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik* (traduite en français par Henri Plard en 1986, sous le titre *Rahel Varnhagen. La vie d'une Juive allemande à l'époque du romantisme*, et rééditée en 2016 aux éditions Payot & Rivages).

La deuxième figure à laquelle nous donnons la parole est Sophie Mereau (née Schubart), dont nous traduisons (en anglais, en italien et en français) les quelques mots introductifs à son roman *Das Blüthenalter der Empfindung* (1794), ainsi qu'un bref extrait (en français) de ce dernier. Dans l'état actuel des choses, l'édition critique la plus complète de ses œuvres est l'édition de Katharina von Hammerstein : Sophie Mereau-Brentano, *Liebe und allenthalben Liebe : Werke und autobiographische Schriften in drei Bänden* (Francfort, Dtv Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1997). Les deux livres les plus représentatifs de Sophie Mereau (*Das Blüthenalter der Empfindung*, précisément, et *Amanda und Eduard*, 1797-1803) sont par ailleurs aisément consultables en ligne dans leur version originale.

La notice sur cette auteure est due à Laure Cahen-Maurel, et les diverses traductions ont été réalisées par David W. Wood (pour l'anglais), Giulia Valpione (pour l'italien) et Laure Cahen-Maurel (pour le français).

Nous consacrons ensuite quelques pages au personnage féminin probablement le plus connu du premier cercle romantique : Caroline Michaelis-Schlegel-Schelling. Tandis que les spécialistes évoquent souvent sa vie affective, nous voulons au contraire souligner l'originalité de sa pensée. Nous présentons ici les premières pages du dialogue écrit avec August Wilhelm Schlegel et paru dans l'*Athenaeum* en 1799, « Die Gemälde » (Les Tableaux) : la traduction anglaise, fondée sur le texte original de l'*Athenaeum*, et la notice introductive sont dues à David W. Wood.

Après l'ouverture de ce dialogue des « Tableaux », la parole revient à une autre figure un peu moins connue, Dorothea Veit-Schlegel, dont nous publions la recension des *Moralische Erzählungen* de Friedrich W. B. Ramdohr, initialement publiée dans le sixième numéro de l'*Athenaeum* (août 1800). L'introduction et la traduction sont le fait de David W. Wood.

Moins célèbre, jusqu'à récemment en tout cas, est Karoline von Günderrode, dont nous publions *Eine persische Erzählung* (en anglais, trad. Anna C. Ezekiel) et *Idee der Erde* (dans une traduction italienne de Giulia Valpione, qui signe également le texte introductif). De cette poétesse et philosophe, existent deux éditions critiques : la première, à laquelle

échappent de nombreux textes inédits, a été effectuée par Leopold Hirschberg (*Gesammelte Werke der Karoline von Günderode*, 3 vol., éd. Leopold Hirschberg, Berlin, Goldschmidt-Gabrielli, 1920-1922, 2<sup>e</sup> éd. 1980) ; la seconde, due à Walter Morgenthaler (*Sämtliche Werke und ausgewählte Studien. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, 3 vol., éd. Walter Morgenthaler, Bâle/Francfort-sur-le-Main, Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1990-1991), se compose de trois volumes : dans le premier sont publiés tous les textes de Karoline von Günderode, dans le deuxième sont recueillies ses notes personnelles et les variantes des textes contenus dans le premier volume, et dans le troisième est proposé un riche appareil critique. Pour la présente anthologie, nous avons préféré utiliser l'édition de Morgenthaler.

L'image utilisée de Karoline von Günderode est la reproduction d'un portrait à l'huile réalisé par Charlotte von Günderode (1780-1801), provenant des collections de l'Historisches Museum de Francfort. Nous remercions ici le Musée de nous avoir accordé l'autorisation gracieuse de reproduire cette œuvre, et Beate Dannhorn pour nous avoir fourni une reproduction de qualité.

L'anthologie se clôt par Bettina Brentano-von Arnim, dont nous publions une des lettres adressées à Goethe (recueillies dans son *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde*, 1835). Pour la traduction (de Giulia Valpione, comme l'est le court texte introductif), nous avons consulté l'édition critique réalisée par Walter Schmitz et Sybille von Steinsdorff (*Werke und Briefe in 4 Bände*, éd. Walter Schmitz et Sybille von Steinsdorff, Francfort-sur-le-Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992).

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Nombreuses seraient les autres philosophes du romantisme qui mériteraient d'être lus et étudiés. Cette anthologie ne peut évidemment pas être exhaustive, mais elle espère en tout cas encourager la recherche future à se lancer sur les traces de ces écrivaines, penseuses et poétesses, en vue de recomposer leurs parcours intellectuels divers et pour une large part encore oubliés aujourd'hui.

Laure Cahen-Maurel  
Giulia Valpione



Rahel Levin Varnhagen



## RAHEL LEVIN VARNHAGEN (1771-1833)

*« Je forme une entreprise qui n'eut jamais d'exemple, et dont l'exécution n'aura point d'imitateur. Je veux montrer à mes semblables un homme dans toute la vérité de la nature, et cet homme, ce sera moi. »* La première phrase désormais célèbre des *Confessions* (1782<sup>1</sup>) de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rahel Varnhagen l'a infirmée. Indépendante, libre par rapport aux conventions, elle s'est faite l'émule de l'écrivain philosophe : Rahel Varnhagen écrit à partir d'elle, dévoilant son intériorité, donnant pour titre et signature à ce qu'elle écrit – essentiellement des entrées de journal intime et des lettres – « *Confessions de J. J. Rahel*<sup>2</sup> ».

Les émules de Rousseau ont été nombreux. Mais ici – ce qui est plus unique ou du moins ironique, voire transgressif, presque une revanche sur la théorie rousseauiste de la condition féminine –, c'est une femme qui cherche à se singulariser et qui revendique son autonomie d'être pensant. C'est aussi la destinée d'une Juive, née Levin, qui se raconte, « paria » par naissance, privée doublement, comme Juive et comme femme, des droits civils dont le citoyen de Genève jouissait. La différence, en cela, est énorme entre elle et la baronne Germaine de Staël, fille du ministre des finances de Louis XVI, Necker. L'émancipation de ce Rousseau féminin et allemand ne passe ni par le mariage (venu tard), ni, à ses propres dires, par la beauté, les talents ou la fortune. Elle ne peut passer que par l'esprit et l'intelligence, pour connaître par introspection et exprimer dans le langage l'individualité, l'originalité et la liberté de son « moi ». Et participer à la vie intellectuelle de son temps.

Lectrice de Spinoza, admiratrice de Lessing et de J. G. Fichte, vouant un culte à Goethe, Rahel Varnhagen préside un des salons les mieux fréquentés de Berlin (avec celui de Henriette Herz) au tournant du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Dès 1790, à l'âge de dix-neuf ans, elle constitue en effet dans l'espace privé – domestique – de sa propre mansarde de la Jägerstrasse un lieu de sociabilité, littéraire, philosophique, politique, mêlant intellectuels, aristocrates, politiciens ou acteurs. Elle y reçoit, entre autres, et jusqu'en 1806, Jean Paul, Ludwig Tieck, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Fichte, les Schlegel et les Mendelssohn ; correspond avec Hegel, Adam Müller, Wilhelm von Humboldt... Un

*deuxième salon succède au premier, dans un autre lieu, de 1819 à sa mort. Faute d'appartenir de droit à la société prussienne, elle souhaite réaliser au moyen des ressources propres au salon, la convivialité et la sympathie (plus que l'urbanité), l'audace et la fermeté dans la défense de ses idées, la sincérité dans les échanges, une société utopique, exempte de préjugés sociaux – loin de l'idéal élitiste aujourd'hui associé à cette pratique.*

*Quelque cent ans plus tard, Rahel Varnhagen est, pour toutes ces raisons, une figure d'identification pour une femme philosophe, Hannah Arendt, qui entreprend d'écrire en vue de son habilitation une « Vie » de celle qu'elle considérerait comme son « amie la plus proche, bien qu'elle fût morte depuis environ un siècle<sup>3</sup> », et comme une personnalité « romantique » par excellence : cultivant la vie, faisant de sa vie une œuvre d'art<sup>4</sup>.*

*Rahel Varnhagen avait elle-même envisagé la publication de ses lettres écrites, à l'origine, à l'adresse de destinataires privés. Certaines d'entre elles, portant sur Goethe, sont d'ailleurs parues de son vivant, en 1812, dans le Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände de Cotta ; s'en sont suivies quelques autres publications dans des journaux ou des revues, des extraits d'échanges épistolaires et un article sur le Wilhelm Meister. Mais c'est seulement à titre posthume que la plus grande partie de ses lettres – on en compte plusieurs milliers – est publiée par le diplomate, historien et essayiste, Karl August Varnhagen, épousé par Rahel en 1814, dans les trois volumes de correspondance et d'extraits de journaux intimes Rahel. Ein Buch des Andenkens für ihre Freunde (1834)<sup>5</sup>.*

*Ces textes ont été expurgés et – selon Arendt – manipulés par Karl Varnhagen : il aurait repeint après sa mort la correspondance de Rahel pour embellir cette dernière et forcer le trait sur l'influence qu'elle avait pu exercer. On a, grâce à Hannah Arendt, qui a retranscrit partiellement les archives autographes conservées alors par la Bibliothèque d'État de Berlin, quelques-unes de ses notations de journal intime et de ses lettres originales. La nouvelle traduction française que nous donnons d'une sélection de textes tient compte de la transcription de Hannah Arendt éditée en appendice de sa biographie Rahel Varnhagen. La vie d'une Juive allemande à l'époque du romantisme<sup>6</sup>.*

*Nous présentons ici un échantillon de sept lettres, ou extraits de lettre, et fragments de journal : d'une anecdote relative à l'enfance, dont l'épistolière tire une réflexion générale sur le mensonge, aux pages vibrantes écrites à la mort du philosophe Fichte, qu'elle considérerait être « l'œil » pénétrant de l'Allemagne, en passant par des réflexions sur la sensibilité, les affects et la passion ; les philosophes en général, et Spinoza en particulier ; la religion ou encore la politique. Autant de sujets sur lesquels Rahel Varnhagen réfléchit pour en éprouver par elle-même la signification, sans conformer à ce qu'on en dit à l'extérieur. Ainsi du mensonge, qu'elle juge être, à contre-courant de la morale et de la religion, une impureté nécessaire en vue d'éduquer les*

*enfants à affronter le monde tout en appelant à ce qu'ils développent une certaine conscience de cette impureté pour en limiter les effets négatifs.*

*Quelques entrées du Journal sont écrites en français. Tous les mots et expressions en italiques suivis d'un astérisque sont également en français dans l'original.*

## An David Veit

Berlin, den 18. Februar 1794  
Nachmittags.

Ich darf Ihnen doch etwas erzählen? – denn mein Brief wird wieder recht lang. Diesen Mittag bei Tische nahm Markus die Kinder in großes Verhör, weil er wirklich eine große Unart gefunden hatte, nämlich den Namen Levin oben in meinem Flur auf die Wand geschmiert. Röschen sagte frei und lachend: „Ich war es nicht“; Ludwig ebenso: „Ich auch nicht“; nur Moritz leugnete, der sagte nämlich: „Ich hab’ ja gar kein Bleistift“ und dabei blieb er; das antwortete er wohl sechzehn- bis siebzehnmals, auf jede Frage, die nun in die Kreuz und Quere wie ein wirkliches Verhör und mit Verstand ihn ängstigend von allen Seiten hin und her getan wurden; seine Farbe zeugte wider ihn, aber selbst das Rotwerden unterdrückte er und blieb recht hübsch dabei: „Ich hab’ ja kein Bleistift“. Er hatte es nun endlich so gut wie gestanden, und obgleich ein Flor von Spaß über der ganzen Geschichte war, so wollten sie ihn doch zum völligsten Geständnis ängstigen; so sagt’ ich: „Nun gestehen kann er’s doch nun nicht, genug, daß er’s geleugnet hat.“ Das gefiel mir sehr. Kaum hatt’ ich die Worte gehört, so mußte ich selbst entsetzlich lachen. (Sagen Sie mir, wie kann ich selbst lachen? Ich dachte sie dort erst, eh’ ich sie sagte! Nun ja! der Klang! – Es gingen noch sehr hübsche Dinge bei der Geschichte vor, zuletzt wie er es denn wirklich gestanden hatte, so sagte Mama: „Man leugnet nicht, man sagt lieber, ich war’s und ich habe nicht gewußt, daß es unrecht ist, nun werd’ ich’s nicht mehr tun“; darauf sagt’ er ganz bieder: „Ich habe erst sehen wollen, ob’s so geht.“ Überhaupt hat er recht hübsch geleugnet; Sie hätten’s sehen sollen. Ich habe dabei gedacht; auch mäßigte ich das Verhör so viel als möglich, und bei meiner ganzen Mühe, ein dickes Gewand darüber zu halten, brachten sie es doch dahin, mir es zu Flor zu zerreiben; denn dieses Leugnen gefiel mir nicht, denn der Junge (wie ein Kind) war seiner Sache nicht gewiß, und das große *crime*, das man ihm immer entgegenwälzte, erschreckte ihn alle Augenblick von neuem, *so gut* er sich auch faßte, und dieser Schreck und Verlegenheit haben immer eine sehr schlechte Wirkung im Charakter, und darum war’s mir auch so höchst peinlich mit anzusehen, ich gab mir alle Mühe, dieses unbedachtsame Verhör, so viel als möglich war, in ein *exercice* des Ausredens zu verwandeln, mit öffentlicher Bewilligung: um so mehr wurde ich fast mißverstanden, aber es ging noch toll genug, Markus *ahndete* so ziemlich. – Warum verbietet man den

## À David Veit

Berlin, l'après-midi du  
18 février 1794.

Je peux bien vous raconter une histoire ? Ma lettre, une fois de plus, sera très longue. Ce midi, à table, Markus a fait subir un interrogatoire aux enfants, parce qu'il venait de découvrir une polissonnerie carabinée : le nom *Levin* gribouillé sur le mur de mon couloir. Röschen déclara sans détour, en riant : « Ce n'est pas moi. » Ludwig de même : « Moi non plus. » Seul Moritz nia et dit : « Je n'ai même pas de crayon » ; il n'ajouta rien de plus. Il fit cette même réponse seize à dix-sept fois à toutes les questions dont on l'assailait, comme dans un interrogatoire en règle, jusqu'à l'effrayer. La coloration de son visage le trahissait, mais il parvint à contenir ce rouge aux joues et conserva une belle prestance tout du long, répétant : « Je n'ai même pas de crayon. » Autant dire qu'il avait finalement avoué, mais ils voulurent le presser à faire des aveux complets, alors que ce n'était qu'un jeu et qu'un voile d'espièglerie recouvrait toute l'histoire. « Il ne peut plus l'avouer maintenant, dis-je, c'est assez qu'il l'ait nié. » Ma formule me plut. À peine avais-je entendu mes propres mots que je ne pus me retenir de rire aux éclats. (Mais dites-moi, comment pouvais-je rire de mes propres mots ? Je les avais pensés avant de les prononcer ! Bref, je m'entends encore rire !) Il s'est passé encore bien des jolies choses dans cette histoire ; pour finir, alors qu'il avait réellement avoué, Maman lui dit : « On ne nie pas, mieux vaut dire : c'était moi, et je ne savais pas que c'était mal : je ne le referai plus. » Sur quoi il ajouta bravement : « Je voulais d'abord voir si ça passerait. » Il a bellement nié – ça, on peut le dire. Ils auraient dû s'en rendre compte. J'y ai mûrement réfléchi. J'ai aussi adouci l'interrogatoire tant que j'ai pu. Pourtant, malgré tous mes efforts pour l'envelopper d'une bourre épaisse, ils réussirent à la rendre aussi ténue qu'un voile. Ces dénégations répétées me déplaisaient : le garçon n'était pas sûr de son fait (comme souvent les enfants) ; le grand *crime*\* qu'on lui mettait sans cesse sous le nez ne faisait que raviver à tout moment son effroi, même s'il sut *parfaitement* se contenir ; cette terreur et cet embarras ont toujours un effet délétère sur le caractère. C'est pour cette raison qu'il m'a été à ce point pénible d'assister à la scène. Je me suis donné toutes les peines du monde pour transformer autant que possible cet interrogatoire inconsidéré en un *exercice*\* acceptable par tous de dissuasion : j'en fus presque d'autant plus incomprise, bien que cela ait fonctionné peu ou prou, comme l'a montré la sanction infligée par Markus.

Kindern so ausdrücklich Leugnen und Ausreden, die man (zwar leider! Aber) doch braucht? Man erzieht sie ja für den Tummel der Welt, und nicht für einen positiven Himmel, der ein rotes Herz und ungeflecktes Gewissen genau belohnt. Morgen weiter. Adieu, ich *muß* plötzlich zu Visite.

Abends nach 10 Uhr

Nun komm' ich wieder mit meinen Kindern. Warum lehrt man sie nicht Lügen, Leugnen und Ausreden sagen, als ein notwendiges Übel, und zeigt es ihnen dabei, wie andere schwere Arbeit, die man schon von selbst wegläßt, wenn man's nicht nötig hat, und sich zarte Hände schont, – so würde man denn sein Gewissen schon pflegen. Fürchterliche Moral, bei mancher gebildeten Inquisition könnte mein *Renommee wenigstens* langsam gebraten werden? Und das wäre nicht einmal das Schlimmste; sie hat auch hier das Ansehen von Torheit oder Dummheit, denn sie scheint ausführbar; im genauesten Verstande der Worte wohl, das fühl' ich so gut als jemand, der's hört; aber daß man sie Kindern begreiflich machen kann, ohne sie zu predigen und sie ihnen predigen kann, ohne sie ihnen lieb zu machen, und grade als Predigt sie ihnen nützlich, ohne schön, vorzustellen, alles durch Handlungen und Widerwillen, am rechten Orte gezeigt, – das glaub' ich doch; bis Sie oder einer mir das Gegenteil ordentlich beweisen! *Bon soir!* Morgen geht's immer Ihren Brief entlang fort.

### Tagebuch, April 1799

J'aurai pour comble de maux le souvenir amer d'une sensibilité qui ne m'a pas procuré le bonheur, mais qui du moins me l'a fait concevoir.

Qu'est-ce que pour les cœurs profondément sensibles que hésiter sans espoir, regretter, s'affiger [*sic*], souffrir? Pour quiconque sait aimer, ces tourments sont inséparables de la vie, comme la fatigue et la lassitude d'un long voyage. Le remords est le seul mal insupportable! nul courage contre les remords! C'est une lâcheté de les supporter sans accablement et plus l'âme est grand et fort [*sic*], plus elle en est anéantie.

Quel pouvoir, quel empire sur la *terre* peut se comparer à celui d'une femme véritablement aimée, si son amant a du caractère et de l'élévation d'âme.

Hélas! qui pourra me plaindre, si je ne puis moi-même donner une idée des maux que je ressens!

Pourquoi interdisons-nous aussi expressément à nos enfants de nier ou de se trouver un prétexte alors que c'est (malheureusement !) nécessaire ? Ne les éduque-t-on pas en vue des mêlées du monde, et non pour un Ciel positif récompensant à leur juste valeur un cœur fier et une conscience morale immaculée ? Je continuerai demain. Adieu, je *dois* inopinément rendre une visite.

Dans la soirée, passé 10 heures

J'en reviens à mes enfants. Pourquoi ne leur apprend-on pas comme un mal nécessaire à mentir, nier, se trouver des excuses, en leur présentant cela comme une corvée parmi d'autres, à laquelle on renonce spontanément quand on n'y est pas obligé et que l'on veut s'épargner ? On développerait au moins leur conscience. Effroyable morale ! Des inquisiteurs cultivés ne pourraient-ils pas pour cela réduire en cendres *au minimum ma réputation* ? Pire : elle a des allures de folie ou de bêtise, tant elle semble irréalisable. Elle peut, certes, s'appliquer, mais à la seule condition de comprendre précisément les termes « mentir », « nier », « se trouver des excuses ». Je ressens aussi vivement que tout autre qui les entend ce que les comportements qu'ils désignent ont de blâmable. Pourtant, qu'on puisse uniquement par l'acte, et en montrant de la répugnance là où il y a lieu, les faire comprendre à des enfants sans toutefois les leur recommander ; ou qu'on puisse les leur recommander sans les leur rendre chers et, précisément en les leur recommandant, les leur présenter comme utiles sans les embellir, ça je le crois, tant que vous ou un autre ne m'aurez pas prouvé le contraire ! *Bon soir* ! Demain je suivrai scrupuleusement le fil de votre lettre.

### **Journal intime, avril 1799<sup>7</sup>**

J'aurai pour comble de maux le souvenir amer d'une sensibilité qui ne m'a pas procuré le bonheur, mais qui du moins me l'a fait concevoir.

Qu'est-ce que pour les cœurs profondément sensibles que hésiter sans espoir, regretter, s'affiger [*sic*], souffrir ? Pour quiconque sait aimer, ces tourments sont inséparables de la vie, comme la fatigue et la lassitude d'un long voyage. Le remords est le seul mal insupportable ! nul courage contre les remords ! C'est une lâcheté de les supporter sans accablement et plus l'âme est grand et fort [*sic*], plus elle en est anéantie.

## An Wilhelm Bokelmann in Cadix

Berlin, den 2. Juli 1801

...Sie irren sich, mein teurer Freund! Ich bin nicht mehr – nicht mehr klingt hier so dumm – so leidenschaftlich, als Sie mich sahen. Der Stoff fehlt mir: und für die Ewigkeit: wenn ich das Gedächtnis nicht verliere. Sie hat sich anders wenden müssen, diese Leidenschaftlichkeit; sie existiert. Eine Sonne hat alle falsche Richtung hinweggebrannt, sie ist als tiefer reiner Quell nur da, ein Reichtum für mein ganzes Leben. ... Die Sprache steht mir aber nicht zu Gebote, die deutsche, meine eigene nicht; unsere Sprache ist unser gelebtes Leben; ich habe mir meines selbst erfunden, ich konnte also weniger Gebrauch, als viele andere, von den einmal fertigen Phrasen machen, darum sind meine oft holperig und in allerlei Art fehlerhaft, aber immer echt. Wenn ich also von meinen Empfindungen spreche, so trage ich eigentlich doch immer ein schon verflossenes Leben vor; und dieses geschieht denn ganz in meiner Sprache. Man hat aber nichts zu befürchten. Ich bin gelassen im handelnden Leben, wie Polonius *nach* dem Tod. Verstehen Sie's? Meine Ausdrücke verbinden zu nichts, ich sprach dann immer nur von mir, wenn's auch anredend geschieht, wenn's auch Titel sind, – immer nur so viel als man davon brauchen kann! Zu dieser *Nachrede* bewogen mich, wie mich dünkt, meine letzten Briefe; und die, die ich schreiben will: denn ich mag mich nicht genieren. Nehmen Sie dies gut auf, Bokelmann! Warum sollen Sie nicht, so viel es möglich ist, *au fait*\* von mir sein, als ich selbst. Manches kann man nicht erraten; und da sag' ich's lieber. Trotzdem, daß es den Schein der Plumpheit wider sich hat. Ich befolge mir aber hier ein Gesetz und *überwinde* mich; weil bei Plumpheit der Schein *auch* schon plump ist. Sie werden schon alles verstehen...

Ihre R. L.

## Tagebuch

März 1803

Das Fühlen ist etwas Feineres, als das Denken: das Denken hat das Vermögen, sich selbst zu erklären, das Fühlen kann das nicht und ist unsere Grenze, diese Grenze sind wir selbst; es weiß nur, daß es existiert. Mit



Quel pouvoir, quel empire sur la *terre* peut se comparer à celui d'une femme véritablement aimée, si son amant a du caractère et de l'élévation d'âme.

Hélas ! qui pourra me plaindre, si je ne puis moi-même donner une idée des maux que je ressens !

### À Wilhelm Bokelmann, Cadix

Berlin, le 2 juillet 1801

[...] Vous vous trompez, mon cher ami ! Je ne suis plus – « plus » sonne tellement stupide ici – aussi passionnée que vous m'avez vue. Je n'ai plus à l'avenir, et pour l'éternité, matière à cela, si encore je ne perds pas la mémoire. Ce caractère passionné a dû chercher une autre voie ; il existe. Un soleil en a brûlé les mauvaises pousses ; il n'existe plus que comme une source pure plus profonde, une richesse pour ma vie entière. [...] Je n'ai pas la maîtrise de la langue, de l'allemand, ma propre langue. Notre langue est notre vécu. Je me suis inventé la mienne. C'est la raison pour laquelle j'ai eu moins que d'autres besoin de recourir à des phrases toutes faites et que les miennes sont souvent pleines de cahots, de toutes sortes de fautes, mais toujours sincères. Par conséquent, lorsque je parle de mes impressions je charrie en réalité une vie toujours déjà écoulée ; et cela a lieu entièrement dans ma langue. Mais il n'y a rien à craindre. Je suis calme dans la vie active, comme Polonius<sup>8</sup> *après* la mort. Comprenez-vous ? Ce que j'exprime n'oblige à rien, je n'ai jamais parlé que de moi, même quand je m'adresse à quelqu'un, même quand il faut donner des titres – toujours dans la limite de l'utile ! Ce sont, je suppose, mes dernières lettres qui me poussent à cette *postface* ; et aussi celles que j'entends écrire, car je ne veux pas me gêner. Prenez-le bien, Bokelmann ! Pourquoi ne seriez-vous pas, autant que faire ce peut, *au fait*\* de ma personne, comme je le suis moi-même ? Il y a des choses qu'on ne peut deviner ; j'aime mieux alors les dire. Même si cela a contre soi l'apparence de la maladresse. Mais je m'impose ici une loi et me *dépasse*. Car dans la maladresse, l'apparence *aussi* est déjà maladroite. Vous comprendrez bien cela...

Votre R. L.

Grenzen ließe sich alles definieren; und die Grenze, die das nicht mehr erlaubt, umschließt unser eigenes Wesen und ist folglich ein Teil desselben.

## Tagebuch

11. März 1810

Was machen Sie?

Nichts. Ich lasse das Leben auf mich regnen.

## An Alexander von der Marwitz

Freitag nachmittag sechs Uhr vorbei,  
schneelig, hell, etwas blau am Himmel,  
den 9. April 1812.

... Diese Woche wollte ich einen Morgen Madam Schleiermacher besuchen; sie hatte Klavierstunde, und Nanny, die aus der Küche kam, führte mich mit Gewalt zu ihm, wo ich aus der reinsten Bescheidenheit weder hinein noch bleiben wollte. Er las in einem neuen Buche eines hiesigen Menschen, der die lutherisch-evangelische Vereinigung will, ich brachte ihm einen Teil von Heinrich Kleists Erzählungen wieder und wollte von ihm ein Buch und griff Spinoza. Ich lese ihn. Den habe ich mir zeitlebens anders gedacht. Ich verstehe ihn sehr gut. Fichte ist viel schwerer. Es ist sonderbar, mir kommt immer vor, als sagten alle Philosophen dasselbe, wenn sie nicht seicht sind. Sie machen sich andere Terminologien, die man ehrlich gleich annehmen kann; und den Unterschied find' ich nur darin, daß sich ein jeder bei einem andern Nichtwissen beruhigt, entweder aus einem solchen seine Deduktion anfängt oder sie dahin führt oder weniger streng es mit drunter laufen läßt. Spinoza gefällt mir sehr; er denkt sehr ehrlich und kommt bis zum tiefsten Absolutesten und drückt es aus, und hat den schönen Charakter des Denkers, unpersönlich, mild, still, in der Tiefe beschäftigt und davon geschickt. „Von den Gemütsbewegungen“ ennuyiert mich, weil das Wichtige im „Vom Geiste“ schon vorkommt und, wie sich's weiter fortbewegt, mir und uns allen genug bekannt ist, den abstrakten, einsamen Mann aber unterhielt, wie es scheint. So viel *ich* von Spinoza. Ich lieb' ihn aber sehr, den Mann. Wissen Sie, was Faust Gretchen

**Journal intime**

Mars 1803

Sentir est quelque chose de plus subtil que penser : la pensée a la faculté de s'expliquer elle-même, le sentiment ne le peut pas, il est notre limite – nous sommes nous-même cette limite ; le sentiment sait seulement qu'il existe. A priori, tout se laisse définir par des limites ; la limite qui ne définit plus comprend notre propre être : elle en est partie intégrante.

**Journal intime**

11 mars 1810

Que faites-vous ?

Rien. Je laisse la vie pleuvoir sur moi.

**À Alexander von der Marwitz**

Vendredi après-midi, passé six heures,  
ciel neigeux, clair, avec un peu de bleu,  
le 9 avril 1812.

[...] Cette semaine, j'ai voulu rendre visite, un matin, à Madame Schleiermacher. Elle avait sa leçon de piano ; Nanny, qui surgit de la cuisine, me conduisit à lui de force : par pure humilité, je ne voulais ni entrer chez lui ni y rester. Il était en train de lire un nouvel ouvrage d'un auteur d'ici prônant l'unification de l'Église évangélique luthérienne. Je lui rendis une partie des *Nouvelles* d'Heinrich Kleist et voulus lui emprunter un livre : j'empoignais Spinoza. Je le lis. Je m'en étais toujours fait une autre idée. Je le comprends très bien. Fichte est beaucoup plus difficile à lire. C'est étrange, j'ai toujours l'impression que les philosophes disent tous la même chose, quand ils ne sont pas superficiels. Ils s'inventent des terminologies différentes, qu'on peut en toute honnêteté adopter indifféremment ; je ne trouve de différence que dans le fait que chacun s'arrête à un autre inconnu, soit qu'il commence sa déduction à partir de lui, soit que sa déduction l'y conduise, ou encore qu'il laisse sa pensée

antwortet, als sie ihn fragt: „Glaubst du an Gott?“ Das schönste *Gebet!* Welch schöne Gebete strömten schon durch eine Seele, die dies antwortet; wie wälzte da der Geist schon Gedanken empor! ...

### **An August von Varnhagen in Koblenz**

Montag abends 6,  
den 14. Februar 1814.

Es war ein schöner heller Sonnenuntergang,  
bei angenehm scharfem Frost.

Obgleich zwei Briefe von Dir vor mir liegen, auf die ich mit unruhvoller Ungeduld lang wartete bis vorgestern; und die tausend Schönheiten einhalten von Dir, für mich und Dich; obgleich ich Dir meine Genesung zu melden habe und Millionen Dinge zu sagen: obgleich ich seit Freitag von unserer gewonnenen Schlacht in Frankreich weiß, so daß ich *ganz Rahlchen* und *all* ihr Leid vergaß: so laß uns doch zuerst von unserem verehrten Lehrer und Freund sprechen, dem ich Ehre und Leben in die Hand gegeben habe würde, ohne noch hinzusehen; dem ich das tausendmal in die Augen hineindachte und nie sagte, welches ich jetzt *grimmig* bereue, weil einem Menschen von anderen edlen, denkend, nichts Höheres werden kann, und wozu ich Elende nie den Mut hatte! Laß uns von *Fichte* sprechen! – Deutschland hat sein eines Auge zugetan; *wie* ein Einäugiger zittre ich nun erst für das andere! Ich nenne keinen; wie die Griechen die Furien umgehen und wahre Herzensangst es immer tut! Nun kann ja Unverstand, Lüge, Irrtum auf dem ganzen Grund und Boden der Erde umherwuchern, und, wie üppiges, ungesteuertes Unkraut, ihr alle Kräfte nehmen und sich aneignen: keiner rottet es mehr aus; pflanzt, befördert, macht ihm Platz, säet ihn aus, den reinen nährenden Weizen, der Geschlecht zu Geschlecht verbessernd zu geleiten vermag! *Fichte* kann umfallen und faulen! Das ist *nicht* Zauber? Krank wie ich war, fand ich es vorgestern unvermutet in der hiesigen Zeitung „aus Berliner Blättern“. Ich weiß nicht, ich war beschämter als erschrocken. *So* gedemütigt! Fast beschämt, daß ich leben geblieben bin: und dann wieder eine wahre *Furcht* vor dem Tod empfindend. Wenn *Fichte* sterben muß, dann ist niemand sicher. Mich dünkte immer, Leben schützt vor dem Tode: wer lebte mehr als der! Tot ist er aber *nicht*. Gewiß nicht! Wenn ich Dir die Torheiten sagen sollte, die ich mir schon gewiß gedacht! Ich rief ihn an; ihm zu! O! Und was dachte ich *noch* alles. (Fürs erste bitte

courir sous cette supposition avec moins de rigueur. Spinoza me plaît beaucoup, sa pensée est d'une grande honnêteté, elle pénètre au plus profond de ce qu'il y a de plus absolu et l'exprime ; il a le beau tempérament du penseur : impersonnel, doux, paisible, travaillant en profondeur, avec beaucoup d'habileté. « Des affects » m'ennuie, parce que l'essentiel se trouve déjà dans « De l'esprit »<sup>9</sup>, et que la façon dont cette pensée avance et se développe m'est, et nous est à tous, déjà assez connue, même si elle divertissait, semble-t-il, cet homme abstrait et solitaire. En tout cas, c'est ce que j'ai *moi* à dire de Spinoza. Mais je l'aime beaucoup, en tant qu'homme. Savez-vous ce que Faust répond à Gretchen lorsqu'elle lui demande : « Crois-tu en Dieu ? » La plus belle des *prières*<sup>10</sup> ! Que de belles prières devaient affluer dans une âme qui fait cette réponse ; comme l'esprit roulait là de sublimes pensées ! [...].

### À August von Varnhagen, Coblenz

Lundi soir, 6 heures,  
le 14 février 1814.

Beau coucher de soleil lumineux,  
par une gelée agréablement vive.

Bien que j'aie sous les yeux deux lettres de toi que j'ai attendues longuement avec une impatience fébrile jusqu'à avant-hier, et qui contiennent mille belles choses de toi, pour moi et pour toi ; que j'aie à t'annoncer ma guérison et à te dire des millions de choses ; que j'aie reçu vendredi la nouvelle de la bataille que nous avons gagnée en France, et que cela m'ait fait *tout* oublier de *la petite Rahel* et de ses souffrances, parlons d'abord de notre vénéré maître et ami, à qui j'aurais confié mon honneur et ma vie sans y regarder de plus près ; à qui mille fois j'ai exprimé cette pensée dans mes regards sans jamais le lui dire, ce qu'à présent je regrette *terriblement*, car un être humain ne peut recevoir des autres, d'âmes nobles qui pensent, un plus haut honneur, et moi, misérable, le courage m'en a toujours manqué ! Parlons de *Fichte* ! – L'Allemagne a fermé un de ses yeux<sup>11</sup> ; *comme* le borgne, je tremble plus que jamais pour l'autre ! À l'instar des Grecs qui désignent les Furies d'une périphrase, et comme fait toujours une profonde angoisse, je ne nomme personne<sup>12</sup> ! L'incompréhension, le mensonge, l'erreur peuvent désormais envahir la surface de la Terre, coloniser son sol et, comme la mauvaise herbe luxuriante, incontrôlée,

ich *Dich*, da Du nun auch in die Sphäre der Nervenfieber kommst, – sie gehen gräßlich raffend hier in Deutschland umher – mach Dir provisorisch, wie mein Artz, eine spanische Fliege! Nimm Dich *sehr* in acht. *Für mich*, August! *Ich bitte*: aus dem Krankenbette; für *mich* schon Dich!) Fichte konnte also nicht erleben, daß sich die Länder vom Krieg erholten, Zäune wieder aufgebaut würden, dem Bauer geholfen, den Gesetzen nachgeholfen, daß die Schulen sich wieder herstellten und füllten; daß gewitzigte Staatsleute ihnen von den Fürsten Schutz verschafften! Daß Gesetze erfunden und ausgefeilt würden, daß die Denker frei, ohne den Augenblick zu schaden, sie Volk und Regenten zur Geistesprüfung vorlegen dürften; dies selbst ein Glück, zu aller Zukunft Glück! Der Mann, der dies, und *also* Deutsches, was *allein* so genannt werden dürfte, nur einzig und allein beabsichtigte, mißverstanden von den meisten Mitlebenden! Also auch *er* soll *nicht* aufgehen sehen, was er aus den dunkeln Schluchten, im Schweiß seines Angesichts, in dem ganzen Aufwand seiner Seelenkraft, hervortrieb? – Lessing! Lessing liegt auch; von wenigen nur nicht vergessen; und mußte kämpfen um das, was jetzt *platt* in jeder Zeitung stehen darf, um das, was solcher Gemeinplatz geworden ist, daß sie den Erfinder vergessen und es in stupider Albernheit *nur ihm nachsprechen* dürfen! Und was würde er *jetzt* wieder den anderen *vorsprechen*! Wie würd' er sie über ihren Dünkel abkappen; sie polemisch, lebendig überführen, ihnen zur rechten Minute Völker und Geschichte vorrücken; in die blinde Aufgeblasenheit Löcher reißen und ihnen die Aussicht für Tat und Sache öffnen und frei machen: mit Ernst und Spott. Dieser Mann mußte sich mit einem Goeze abringen; und Schutt wegräumen, der damals fest und gerade stand wie *unsere* Gebäude. So auch Racine, und Voltaire, und all die anderen, die sie jetzt verachten wollen; weil sie die Zeit nicht fassen, in der jene leben mußten. Racine mußte große Kränkungen erleben, große Korrespondenzen führen, weil sein Sohn Manschetten angehabt hatte und in einer gewissen Schule darum nicht mehr geduldet werden sollte, und mußte diesen jungen Menschen deshalb schelten und sich anklagen und entschuldigen! Die berühmte blinde Französin, Mad. du Deffand glaub' ich, wurde krank, von ihrer Tochter verfolgt, weil diese rechtgläubig und die Mutter es *nicht* war! Mit Gewalt schickte man einem der Dichter, der krank war, die Sakramente! Und diese Leute sollten *davon* sprechen und schreiben, *was* jetzt vorgeht? Die Religion der Jetzigen ist prahlerischer als der Abscheu jener vor den nur herrschenden *Ceremonien* derselben. Lessing, Fichte! Und ihr Ehrlichen *alle*, möget ihr unsere Fortschritte *sehen* und uns mit euren starken Geistern

aspirer toutes ses forces, se les approprier : il n'y a plus personne pour les éradiquer. Personne pour semer, planter, faire croître sur un terrain défriché le pur froment nourricier susceptible d'accompagner les hommes de génération en génération et de les rendre meilleurs. *Fichte* peut mourir et pourrir ! N'est-ce *pas* là une diablerie ? Malade, j'ai découvert inopinément cette annonce avant-hier dans le journal local : « nouvelles parues dans le Journal de Berlin<sup>13</sup> ». Je ne sais ce que j'ai éprouvé le plus : la honte ou l'effroi. Je me suis sentie *si* humiliée ! Honteuse presque de lui avoir survécu ; et puis, de nouveau, prise d'une véritable *peur* de la mort. Si *Fichte* doit mourir, alors personne n'est en sûreté. J'avais toujours pensé que la vie protégeait de la mort : et qui a vécu plus que lui ! Mais il n'est *pas* mort. Certainement pas ! Si je devais t'avouer toutes les folies qui ont pu me traverser l'esprit ! Je l'ai invoqué ; mon appel confinait au cri ! Oh ! Et à quoi n'ai-je pas *encore* songé ! (Tout d'abord, je t'en prie, puisque *tu* entres toi aussi dans cette région où sévissent des fièvres nerveuses – elles font des ravages épouvantables ici, dans toute l'Allemagne –, applique-toi provisoirement, comme le fait mon médecin, une emplâtre de cantharides ! Prends *bien* soin de toi. *Pour moi*, August ! *Je t'en supplie* de mon lit de malade : ménage-toi pour *moi* !) *Fichte* n'aura donc pas pu voir les pays se remettre de la guerre, les clôtures reconstruites, le paysan secouru, les lois amendées, les écoles rétablies et de nouveau remplies ; des hommes d'État avertis procurer à tous la protection des princes ; des lois conçues, précisées, présentées en toute liberté par des penseurs à l'examen du peuple et du souverain, et adaptées aux nécessités du moment – ce qui est une chance, la chance pour tout avenir ! Lui qui n'avait en vue que cela – *cela seul* qui peut s'appeler la nation allemande –, qui pourtant fut incompris de la plupart de ses contemporains ! *Il* ne verra donc *pas* se réaliser ce qu'il a encouragé du fond des ravins, à la sueur de son front, en y mettant toutes les forces de son âme ? – Lessing ! Lessing repose lui aussi. Rares sont ceux qui ne l'ont pas oublié ; il a dû se battre pour ce qui désormais fait figure de *platitudo*, lisible dans n'importe quel journal, pour ce qui est devenu un lieu commun qu'on ne peut que *répéter* avec toute la stupidité du monde sans savoir qui en est l'auteur ! Et *de nos jours*, que ne dirait-il pas toujours *avant* les autres ! Comme il rabaisserait leur prétention ! Comme il les confondrait par son esprit alerte et polémique, entre sérieux et ironie, donnant en exemple bien à propos peuples et Histoire, perçant l'enflure de leur fatuité aveugle pour leur ouvrir des perspectives d'action concrète et libérer les esprits. Cet homme a dû batailler avec un Goeze et déblayer des décombres qui autrefois se dressaient aussi solidement et aussi droits que *nos* édifices.

RAHEL LEVIN VARNHAGEN

segnen! *So* denke ich mir Heilige; begabt von Gott, geliebt von ihm, ihm  
treu. Selig sei unser ehrlicher Lehrer!



De même pour Racine, ou pour Voltaire ; de même pour tous ceux qu'ils veulent aujourd'hui mépriser parce qu'ils ne saisissent pas l'époque à laquelle ces esprits ont dû vivre. Racine dut essayer de graves affronts, échanger une abondante correspondance parce que son fils avait porté des manchettes et qu'une certaine école ne l'avait pas toléré ; il dut pour cela réprimander le jeune homme, s'accuser et s'excuser ! La célèbre Française aveugle, Madame du Deffand, je crois, tomba malade pour avoir été persécutée par sa fille, car celle-ci était bigote et que la mère ne l'était *pas* ! Il a fallu recourir à la force pour qu'un de ces poètes qui était malade reçût les sacrements ! Et ce sont ceux-là qu'on devrait écouter parler et écrire à propos *de ce qui* se passe aujourd'hui ! La religion du temps présent est une vantardise pire que l'aversion de ces penseurs pour un *cérémonial* aujourd'hui tout puissant. Lessing, Fichte ! Et vous *tous* qui êtes honnêtes ! Puissiez-vous *voir* nos progrès et puissent vos esprits forts nous bénir ! C'est *ainsi* que je me représente les saints : dotés d'un don par Dieu, aimés de lui, fidèlement attachés à lui. Bienheureux soit notre honnête maître !

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<sup>1</sup> Pour les six premiers livres, rédigés en 1765-1767 et couvrant les années de formation de Rousseau, de sa naissance à Genève, en 1712, à l'installation à Paris, en 1740, à l'âge de 28 ans ; les six livres suivants (VII à XII), sur les années parisiennes (1741-1765), paraissent en 1789.

<sup>2</sup> Rahel Varnhagen, lettre du 16 octobre 1794 à son ami d'enfance, David Veit, in *Briefwechsel zwischen Rahel und David Veit. Aus dem Nachlass Varnhagens von Ense*, 2 vol., Leipzig, Brockhaus, 1861, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt, lettre à Blücher du 7 juillet 1936, qui se trouve parmi les manuscrits de Hannah Arendt conservés à la Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>4</sup> Voir Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik*, München, Piper Verlag, 2020, p. 13 sq. ; *Rahel Varnhagen. La vie d'une Juive allemande à l'époque du romantisme*, suivi des *Lettres et journal de Rahel (1793-1814)*, trad. fr. Henri Plard, Paris, Payot & Rivages, 2016, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Voir *Rahel. Ein Buch des Andenkens für ihre Freunde*, 3 vol., Berlin, Duncker und Humblot, 1834.

<sup>6</sup> Édition allemande précédemment citée : Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik*, München, Piper Verlag, 2020 (1<sup>re</sup> éd. 1959). L'ouvrage de Hannah Arendt est d'abord paru, pour la première fois, en anglais, dans une traduction de Richard et Clara Winston sous le titre *Rahel Varnhagen, The Life of a Jewess* (London, East and West Library, 1957), avec le soutien du Leo Baeck Institute.

<sup>7</sup> Notation de journal en français dans l'original.

<sup>8</sup> Personnage de la tragédie de Shakespeare *Hamlet*, qui, à l'Acte III, scène 4, se cache derrière une tapisserie dans l'appartement de la Reine pour écouter un échange entre elle et son fils. Hamlet menaçant sa mère, Polonius ne peut se contenir ; feignant de croire que c'est le bruit d'un rat, Hamlet transperce la tapisserie d'un coup d'épée. Polonius meurt.

<sup>9</sup> Rahel Varnhagen fait ici référence aux deuxième et troisième parties de *L'Éthique* : « *De Natura, & Origine Mentis* (De la nature et de l'origine de l'esprit) » et « *De Origine, & Natura Affectuum* (De l'origine et de la nature des sentiments) ».

<sup>10</sup> La réponse célèbre de Faust, omise ici, est la suivante : « Nenn' es dann wie du willst,/ Nenn's Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott!/ Ich habe keinen Namen/ Dafür! Gefühl ist alles (Nomme-le comme tu voudras :/ bonheur, cœur, amour, Dieu,/ Je n'ai pas de nom pour cela. Le sentiment est tout) » (*Faust I*, v. 3453-3456).

<sup>11</sup> Fichte est mort deux semaines auparavant, le 29 janvier 1814. Rahel Varnhagen séjournant alors à Prague, d'où elle écrit cette lettre, découvre l'annonce différée de la disparition du philosophe dans le journal local. Voir *infra*, note 11.

<sup>12</sup> Rahel Varnhagen pense ici à Goethe.

<sup>13</sup> Il s'agit du *K. K. privil. Prager Oberpostamtszeitung*, n° 18, daté du vendredi 11 février 1814 ; sous l'intitulé « Berlin, le 1<sup>er</sup> février » sont reproduits le texte des deux premières phrases du journal berlinois *Vossischen Zeitung*, n° 14, du 1<sup>er</sup> février 1814, faisant part du décès de Fichte. Voir *J. G. Fichte im Gespräch. Berichte der Zeitgenossen*, éd. Erich Fuchs, en collaboration avec Reinhard Lauth et Walter Schieche, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann-Holzboog, 1991, vol. 5 : 1812-1814, p. 112.





Sophie Friederike Schubart-Mereau

## SOPHIE FRIEDERIKE SCHUBART-MEREAU (1770-1806)

*De toutes les personnalités féminines liées au romantisme allemand, Sophie Mereau (née Schubart) est sans doute celle qui a été la plus négligée. On n'accorde pas en tout cas à son œuvre l'intérêt philosophique qu'elle mérite. Présente à Iéna au moment de l'émergence de l'idéalisme et du romantisme allemands, jeune poétesse protégée de Schiller, Sophie Mereau a étudié la philosophie critique de Kant et de Fichte. On sait qu'elle a été la première étudiante femme de Fichte, dont elle a suivi les séminaires sur la Wissenschaftslehre et les leçons sur la vocation du savant. Qu'elle a accueilli avec enthousiasme la publication, en 1795, du Projet de paix perpétuelle de Kant. Elle est aussi connue pour avoir été la première femme, en Allemagne, à vivre de sa plume en faisant de son activité d'écriture et de traduction un véritable métier.*

*Ce qu'elle compose dans le domaine de la création littéraire fait écho, voire répond, à ce que les deux grandes figures du criticisme produisent dans le domaine de la métaphysique ou de la spéculation. Son roman philosophique, Das Blüthenalter der Empfindung (La Floraison des sentiments), qui paraît en 1794 (la même année que les leçons de Fichte sur la vocation du savant), exprime à travers le récit fictif d'une union amoureuse ses propres vues en réaction aux théories kantienne et fichtiennes sur l'autonomie, la vérité, la raison et les sentiments. Pour le spécialiste Adrian Daub, ce roman, en avance de deux ans sur les considérations de Fichte au sujet du mariage dans Fondement du droit naturel (1796/97), anticipe dans un esprit féministe, et ce bien avant la Lucinde de Friedrich Schlegel ou le Florentin de Dorothea Veit-Schlegel, le reproche fondamental qui peut être fait à une « métaphysique du mariage » où la célébration de cette union civile semble induire un renoncement à l'autonomie<sup>1</sup>.*

*Das Blüthenalter der Empfindung n'est pas l'unique roman de Sophie Mereau, qui écrit par la suite et publie pour la première fois en 1797, dans la revue Die Horen (Les Heures) de Schiller, un roman épistolaire, Briefe von Amanda und Eduard. Elle fonde également, en 1801, sa propre revue intitulée Kalathiskos, pour laquelle elle a tenté d'obtenir la collaboration de Kant, adressant, à cette fin, un exemplaire de son roman Das Blüthenalter der Empfindung au philosophe de Königsberg.*

*Nous traduisons ici en italien, anglais et français l'Avant-Propos à ce roman, ainsi que, en français, un bref extrait du livre : un dialogue entre les deux jeunes protagonistes, Albert et Nannette, où sont interrogés les rapports entre les femmes et les hommes tels que la société et l'État les régulent.*

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<sup>1</sup> Adrian Daub, *Uncivil Unions: The Metaphysics of Marriage in German Idealism and Romanticism*, Chicago, London, The University of Chicago Press, 2012, p. 207.

Sophie Friederike Schubart-Mereau

*Das Blütenalter der Empfindung*

Gotha, Justus Perthes, 1794.

**Ein paar Worte über das Folgende**

Es giebt eine Zeit in unserm Leben, wo unser Gefühl in seiner ersten vollen Blüthe steht, wo das trunkne Herz, selbst in seinen Verirrungen noch unschuldig, nach jedem Schattenbilde der Phantasie [1] hascht, wo wir in holden Träumen schwelgen, an Erfahrung Kinder, an Genuß Götter sind, wo selbst der Kummer noch süß ist. Wir denken, wir fühlen da wohl manches, was eine größere Reife des Geistes uns späterhin in ganz anderm Lichte erscheinen läßt; aber auch der Irrthum ist Uebung unsrer Kräfte, und wuchert für das künftige [2] Erkenntniß der Wahrheit. Diese Zeit, die die verschiedenen Verhältnisse der Dinge außer uns bei dem Einem verlängern und bei dem Andern abkürzen, nennen wir den Frühling unsers Lebens, und selbst der weisere Mensch schaut oft, wenn sie verschwunden, mit dem Blikke der Sehnsucht auf sie zurück. – Doch sie verschwindet [3] bald! – Der helle Stral der Vernunft weckt uns aus dem lieblichen Schlummer, wir fühlen, daß uns ein höheres Gesez vonnöthen ist, und das Bedürfniß, nach deutlichbestimmten Gründen zu handeln, regt sich immer lauter und lauter in uns.

Ob es mir gelungen ist, die Aeüßerungen eines reinen Gefühls [4], unter gewissen äußern Verhältnissen, befriedigend darzustellen, dies bleibt dem Urtheil jedes Einzelnen überlassen. Die höhern Forderungen einer reifern Vernunft zu entwickeln, das lag nicht in meinem Plane.

Uebrigens soll das eben Gesagte die Aufmerksamkeit weder von dem folgenden ab- noch auf dasselbe hinziehen, [5] ziehen, sondern blos ganz einfach den Gesichtspunkt andeuten, woraus dieser erste kleine Versuch betrachtet zu seyn wünscht.

Die Verfasserinn.

### Qualche parola su quanto segue

C'è un momento nella nostra vita in cui i nostri sentimenti sono al loro primo sbocciare, in cui l'ebbro cuore, ancora innocente anche nei suoi smarrimenti, è avido di ogni chimera dell'immaginazione [1]; in cui ci dilettiamo in dolci sogni; in cui siamo certo bambini di fronte all'esperienza, ma anche divinità di fronte piacere; in cui anche gli affanni sono ancora dolci. Pensiamo e sentiamo molte cose che una maggiore maturità di spirito ci farà poi apparire in una luce completamente diversa, ma anche l'errore è un esercizio delle nostre forze, e pullula per la futura [2] conoscenza della verità. Noi chiamiamo primavera della nostra vita questa stagione, che le varie relazioni delle cose al di fuori di noi da una parte allungano e dall'altra accorciano, e anche l'uomo più saggio spesso la guarda con lo sguardo di nostalgia quando è terminata. – Infatti svanisce [3] *p r e s t o !* – Il raggio luminoso della ragione ci sveglia dal nostro dolce sonno, sentiamo che ci è necessario una legge più alta, e il bisogno di agire secondo ragioni chiaramente determinate si fa in noi sempre più forte.

Se sono riuscito a presentare le espressioni di un sentimento puro [4] in modo soddisfacente in certe condizioni esterne, questo è lasciato al giudizio di ognuno. Non era nel mio piano sviluppare le esigenze più elevate di una ragione più matura.

Per inciso, ciò che è stato appena detto non è inteso a distogliere (o a concentrare) l'attenzione rispetto a quanto segue [5], bensì semplicemente ad indicare il punto di vista da cui questo primo piccolo tentativo vuole essere considerato.

L'autrice

### A Few Words about the Following

There is a time in our life when our feelings are in their first full bloom, when the intoxicated heart is still innocent, even in its confusion, and chases after every shadowy and fantastic [1] image; where we revel in tender dreams, are children in our experiences, gods in our delight, where even sorrow is still sweet. We indeed think and feel many things, which with a greater maturity of spirit later appear to us in an altogether different light; but even error is an exercise of our forces, and proliferates for the future [2] knowledge of the truth. This time, which with respect to external circumstances is longer for some people and shorter for others, is called the springtime of our life; even the sage often looks back on it with a longing gaze when this epoch has passed. Yet how *quickly* [3] it disappears! – The bright glow of reason

awakens us from a sweet slumber, we feel the necessity of a superior law, and the need to act according to clearly determined reasons sounds louder and louder in us.

Whether I have succeeded in satisfactorily presenting the expressions of a *pure feeling* [4] under certain external circumstances is up to everyone to judge for themselves. It was not my plan to develop the higher demands of a *mature reason*.

Incidentally, what has just been said is not intended to either attract or repel attention [5], but simply to indicate the standpoint from which this first small essay wishes to be considered.

The authoress

### **Quelques mots sur ce qui suit**

Il est un moment de notre vie où nos sentiments arrivent pleinement, pour la première fois, à floraison ; où le cœur plein d'ivresse, encore innocent jusque dans ses égarements, poursuit chaque chimère [1] de l'imagination ; où nous nous grisons de rêves tendres ; où nous sommes enfants par l'expérience, dieux par la jouissance ; où même le souci nous est doux. Nous pensons, nous éprouvons bien des choses qu'une plus grande maturité d'esprit nous fait apparaître plus tard sous un tout autre jour ; mais l'erreur aussi est un exercice de nos forces, elle pullule pour la [2] connaissance future de la vérité. Cet âge que divers contextes au dehors prolonge pour certains, écourte pour d'autres, nous l'appelons le printemps de la vie, et même l'être humain doué d'une plus grande sagesse regarde en arrière vers lui avec nostalgie quand il a disparu. – Et il disparaît [3] *vite* ! Le clair rayon de la raison nous tire de notre doux sommeil, nous ressentons le besoin d'une loi supérieure, la nécessité d'agir en vertu de motifs clairement définis résonne en nous de plus en plus fortement.

Chacun jugera si je suis parvenue à peindre de manière satisfaisante le *pur sentiment* [4] tel qu'il s'exprime dans certaines circonstances extérieures. Mon intention n'a pas été de développer les exigences supérieures d'une *raison plus mûre*.

Du reste, ce qui vient d'être dit n'a pas pour but de détourner l'attention de ce qui suit, ni non plus d'attirer l'attention sur ce qui suit [5], mais tout simplement de montrer ce premier petit essai sous le point de vue selon lequel il souhaite être envisagé.

L'auteur.





Illustration de l'édition originale de *Das Blütenalter der Empfindung* (1794)

### Auszug

...Wo haben wohl Weiber das Recht, sich unmittelbar des Schutzes der Gesezze freuen zu dürfen? – sind sie nicht fast allenthalben mehr der Willkühr des Mannes unterworfen? wie wenig wird noch jezt auf ihre natürlichen Rechte, auf den ungestörten Genuß ihrer Freiheit und ihrer Kräfte Rücksicht genommen! werden sie nicht vielmehr bloß geduldet als beschützt? –

[96] Nanette, rief ich mit glühenden Wangen, und preßte ihre beiden Hände an mein Herz, so laß denn diese äußerlichen Vorkehrungen, die für arglose Herzen, wie die unsrigen, nicht gemacht sind. Giebt es eine Form, die der Inhalt nicht heiligt? – kann etwas ehrwürdiger seyn als unsre Verbindung? – Zwei freie Wesen schließen den Bund, gemeinschaftlich zu wirken, gemeinschaftlich Gutes zu thun, gemeinschaftlich zu leiden. – Unser Bund besteht durch eigene Kraft. Nicht die zerbrechlichen Stützen von priesterlichem Seegen, von bürgerlicher Ehre, von kränkelder Gewissenhaftigkeit halten ihn. Wir selbst sind uns Bürge für uns selbst. – Weder Natur noch Vernunft lehrten die Menschen diese Vorkehrungen zu gebrauchen. Klugheit that es, eine Tugend, die erst [97] aus den Trümmern menschlicher Unschuld und Reinheit hervorwuchs, und durch Verdorbenheit nöthig ward. – Ob wir sie bedürfen? – Liebe! kennen wir uns nicht? – Wir werden ewig so seyn, weil wir es jezt sind! –

Die Tante nahm das Wort. Nanette schwieg; aber ein Stral von unbeschreiblicher Liebe und Hoheit drang aus ihrem Auge in meine Seele. Ich sah in ihrem Blikke die höchste Stufe menschlicher Veredlung, das reinste Ideal menschlicher Schönheit, die zarteste Verhüllung großer himmlischer Gefühle. Sie vergessen junger Mensch, sagte die Tante mit ruhiger Fassung, daß die Gesellschaft, worinn Sie leben, allerdings Gehorsam für ihre Verordnungen von Ihnen verlangen kann, daß Sie ihr für die Bildung, für die [98] Vortheile, die sie Ihnen verliehen, auch Achtung für ihre Forderungen schuldig sind, und daß es nicht so leicht ist, als Sie jezt glauben, die ruhigen sichern Vortheile bürgerlicher Verhältnisse dem Genuß eines Gutes aufzuopfern, das Leidenschaft Ihnen jezt als das höchste Einzige vor Augen stellt. O Mutter, unterbrach ich sie mit aller Fülle des überströmenden Herzens, was hat der Staat, was haben die Gesezze mit unsern Empfindungen gemein? – Hat er uns diese heiligen Gefühle angebildet? – können sie uns dieses ehrenvolle gegenseitige Vertrauen, unter dessen Himmel die zarte Blume ehelicher Liebe allein gedeihen kann, anbefehlen? – ist beides nicht nach allem Rechte bloß unser

**Extrait**

[...] Où donc les femmes ont-elles le droit de bénéficier de la protection directe de la loi ? Ne sont-elles pas, presque partout, davantage soumises à l'arbitre de l'homme ? Combien, encore aujourd'hui, leurs droits naturels, la jouissance sans entrave de leur liberté et de leurs forces comptent peu ! Ne sont-elles pas simplement *tolérées* plutôt que *protégées* ?

[96] « *Nanette*, m'écriais-je, le feu aux joues et pressant ses deux mains sur ma poitrine, laisse ces dispositions extérieures, qui ne sont pas faites pour des cœurs ingénus comme les nôtres. Est-il une *forme* que son *contenu* ne rende pas sacrée ? Est-il quelque chose de plus vénérable que notre union ? Deux êtres libres contractent une alliance qui les engagent à agir, à faire le bien, à *souffrir* ensemble. Notre lien existe de par sa *propre force*. Il n'est pas soutenu par les fragiles béquilles de la bénédiction donnée par le prêtre, des devoirs de la vie civile, du scrupule maladif. Nous sommes *nous-mêmes* les garants de *nous-mêmes*. Ni la nature ni la raison n'ont enseigné aux êtres humains à prendre de telles dispositions. La prudence l'a fait – vertu qui [97] a poussé sur les ruines de l'innocence et de la pureté humaines et que la corruption a rendue nécessaire. En avons-nous besoin ? Mon amour ! Ne nous connaissons-nous pas nous-mêmes ? Nous serons tels à jamais, car nous le sommes maintenant ! »

La tante prit la parole. Nanette était silencieuse mais un rayon d'amour et de grandeur indescriptibles brilla dans ses yeux et pénétra jusque dans mon âme. Je vis dans son regard le degré le plus haut d'ennoblissement humain, le plus pur idéal de la beauté humaine, la plus délicate enveloppe de grands sentiments célestes. « Vous oubliez, jeune homme, dit la tante, l'air calme, que la société dans laquelle vous vivez peut cependant exiger de vous l'obéissance à ses décrets, que vous lui êtes redevables de l'éducation et [98] des avantages qu'elle vous a accordés, que vous vous devez aussi de respecter ses exigences, et que, contrairement à ce que vous pensez, il n'est pas si simple de sacrifier à la jouissance d'un bien que la passion vous présente aujourd'hui comme la seule chose la plus élevée les avantages tranquilles et sûrs conférés par la société civile. » « – Ô mère, l'interrompais-je, de tout mon cœur débordant, qu'est-ce que l'État, qu'est-ce que les lois ont en commun avec nos sentiments ? Est-ce *l'État* qui a façonné en nous ces sentiments sacrés ? Les lois peuvent-elles nous *enjoindre* cette honorable confiance mutuelle, sous le ciel de laquelle la tendre fleur de l'amour conjugal peut seul s'épanouir ? Ces deux choses ne sont-elles pas purement et simplement, de plein droit, notre propriété ? Qui a le droit de s'interposer entre nous ? Si notre contrat [99] est fondé sur la vérité, alors il vaut pour

Eigenthum? – wer darf sich zwischen uns stellen? – War unser Vertrag [99] auf Wahrhaftigkeit gegründet, so ist seine Dauer ewig, und war er es nicht, so ist er nie gewesen. Niemand kann hier rechten, als sie und ich. – Die Tante unterbrach mich von neuem. Meine Gründe, die mir so unwiderstehlich schienen, thaten hier die gehoffte Wirkung nicht. Mit ihrer kalten ruhigen Fassung war es ihr leicht, sich über meine leidenschaftliche Ungedult Lorbeern zu erringen. Unverrückt verfolgte sie ihren Plan bei ihrer Widerlegung, nur auf die Wirklichkeit Rücksicht zu nehmen, und die gegenwärtige Verfassung der Welt mit keiner idealischen verwechseln zu lassen. Ich war außer mir, und ich weis nicht, wie mir das ins Herz kam. O hätte ich nur jezt, rief ich halb in Verzweiflung, hätte ich nur jezt Lorenzo's Seelenzwingende Beredtsamkeit! –

l'éternité ; s'il ne l'est pas, alors il n'a jamais existé. Personne d'autre qu'elle et moi ne peut en juger ici. » La tante m'interrompit de nouveau. Les raisons que j'alléguais et qui me semblaient tellement irrésistibles, n'eurent pas l'effet escompté. Avec son calme et son sang-froid, il lui était facile de remporter une victoire sur mon impatience passionnée. Imperturbable, elle poursuivit sa réfutation en ne cherchant qu'à tenir compte de la *réalité* et à ne pas confondre la constitution *actuelle* du monde avec une quelconque constitution idéale. J'étais hors de moi, et je ne saurais dire comment cela m'est venu. « Oh, si seulement j'avais à cet instant, m'exclamais-je, presque en proie au désespoir, si seulement j'avais à cet instant l'éloquence impérieuse de Lorenzo ! »



Caroline Michaelis-Schlegel, portrait by Johann F.A. Tischbein (1798)

CAROLINE MICHAELIS-SCHLEGEL (1763-1809)

*The following short excerpt is from a text whose authorship in the research is attributed to both Caroline Schlegel and August Wilhelm Schlegel. Entitled, Die Gemälde. Ein Gespräch (The Paintings. A Conversation), it was originally published in 1799 in the Athenaeum.<sup>1</sup> In the contents pages of the journal, the authorship of this piece was solely attributed to “W” (August Wilhelm Schlegel). However, from personal letters and other testimony it is clear that the text was also written by Caroline Schlegel.<sup>2</sup>*

*The following excerpt is the opening scene of The Paintings. It begins with two characters – Louise and Waller – discussing the art and theory of sculpture in the Dresden antiquities collection. (Later in the piece they will be joined by a third figure Reinhold, and move on to discussing paintings and specific artists). Speculation exists that the characters of Louise and Waller are actually based on Caroline and August Wilhelm themselves, or perhaps Novalis is even behind Waller or Reinhold, or all figures are a symphilosophical mixture based the communal visits of the Romantic Circle to the Dresden collections in summer 1798. Margaret Stoljar has produced a commentary on the Athenaeum in which the questions of authorship, pseudonymity, and other artistic issues are examined.<sup>3</sup>*

*Among others, an edition in German of some of Caroline Schlegel’s reviews is included in: Rezensionen über schöne Literatur von Schelling und Caroline in der Neuen Jenaischen Literatur-Zeitung, ed. Erich Frank (Heidelberg: Carl Winter’s Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1912); while a vast selection of her letters can be found in Caroline: Briefe, ed. Georg Waitz, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1871). Selected letters, reviews, and a parody by Caroline Schlegel are translated into English in: Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings, edited by Jochen Schulte-Sasse et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 443-455; While translations of many of her letters are also available online in English.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> *Die Gemälde. Ein Gespräch* in: *Athenaeum. Eine Zeitschrift von August Wilhelm Schlegel und Friedrich Schlegel*, Zweiten Bandes, Erstes Stück (Berlin: Heinrich Fröhlich, 1799), 39-151. This excerpt is from pages 39-43.

<sup>2</sup> Among others, see Caroline Schlegel’s letter to Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), 15 November 1798: “Our lovely essay *The Paintings* has not been published yet. I’d like it to be published in the *Propyläen*.” Translated in: *Symphilosophie: International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism* 1 (2019): 175.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Stoljar, *Athenaeum: A Critical Commentary* (Bern: H. Lang, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> For instance, see the many translations by Douglas W. Stott at the site *Caroline: Letters from Early Romanticism*: <http://www.carolineschelling.com>

Caroline Schlegel & August Wilhelm Schlegel

*Die Gemähld.*

*Gespräch.*

**Louise.** Sie gehen so gedankenvoll unter den Antiken auf und ab, Waller; dichten Sie etwa einen Hymnus auf die alten Götter?

**Waller.** Ich weiß nicht, wie es ist: so oft ich in diesen Saal trete, fühle ich mich zur Rückkehr in mein Innres eingeladen, und bin unter den jungen Künstlern, die hier arbeiten, auch wohl unter dem Gewühl begaffender Fremden, wie in der tiefsten Einsamkeit.

**Louise.** Es ist der Nachahmungstrieb, lieber Freund; Sie wollen selbst zur Bildsäule werden.

**Waller.** Unandächtige! Ihr Spott trifft näher an die Wahrheit als Sie glauben. Müssen Sie nicht gestehn, daß sich viele Menschen nicht wenig dünken, die herzlich schlechte Statuen abgeben würden?

**Louise.** Ganz gewiß; und ich habe mir oft das Unheil gedacht, wenn plötzlich ein Perseus mit dem versteinernen Medusenhaupt in unsre Schauspielhäuser oder Tanzsäle träte.

**Waller.** Das gäbe Gruppen von Bernini, oder noch schlimmere. Für so viele Gebärden und Bewegungen ist die Dauer eines Augenblicks schon zu lang: für beständig festgehalten, erscheinen sie in ihrer ganzen Blöße und Unwürdigkeit. Auch über das Unvollendete der Gestalt täuscht das Leben: aber die Bildnerey ist Wahrheit und über alle Täuschung erhaben. Ihre Schöpfungen sind wie Geister, die ihre äußre Hülle überall durchdrungen, und die Umgränzung derselben ihrem Wesen gemäß geordnet haben; sie können nun in dieser selbstgebildeten Welt mit ruhigem genügendem Daseyn beharren. Es ist eine sichtbare ewige Seligkeit.

**Louise.** Die ich ihnen für jetzt noch gönne. Sie rufen beynah, wie jener Prophet in der Wüste: ich sage euch, Gott könnte dem Abraham aus diesen Steinen Kinder erwecken. Aber was Sie sagten, gilt nur von den Olympiern, die schon ihren eignen Himmel haben; wo sollen in dem Ihrigen die Faunen Platz finden, die mit Nymphen scherzen, die Fechter, die im Ausfalle begriffen sind, die Helden, die sich in Todesnoth gegen umwindende Schlangen wehren?

**Waller.** Vergessen Sie nicht, daß von keiner sittlichen, sondern von natürlicher Vollendung die Rede ist, die in der Durchbildung von innen heraus, in der Ausschließung des Zufälligen, der durchgängigen



Caroline Schlegel & August Wilhelm Schlegel

## The Paintings

### A Conversation

**Louise.** You're wandering so meditatively among the antiquities, Waller, are you perhaps composing a hymn to the old gods?

**Waller.** I don't know, but whenever I enter this hall, I feel invited to return into my inner self; and I feel among the young artists working here, or under the gaze of a crowd of strangers, as though in the deepest solitude.

**Louise.** It is the imitation drive, my dear friend; you want to become a statue yourself.

**Waller.** Irreverence! Your mockery strikes closer to the truth than you realize. You have to admit that many people who think highly of themselves would make pretty bad statues.

**Louise.** Absolutely. And I've often imagined the calamity that would ensue if Perseus suddenly appeared in one of our theaters or dance halls carrying the petrifying head of Medusa.

**Waller.** The result would be Bernini's sculptural groups, or something worse. The duration of a moment is far too long for many gestures and movements: fixed forever, they would appear in all their triviality and worthlessness. Life also deceives concerning the imperfection of the form: but the art of sculpture is truth, and is superior to all illusion. Its creations are like spirits, who have everywhere penetrated their outer shell, and have organized this boundary according to their essence; they can therefore serenely and sufficiently exist in this self-constituted world. It is an eternal visible blessedness.

**Louise.** Which I grant them for now. You're almost like that prophet crying in the wilderness: I tell you, out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. But what you said only holds for the Olympians, who already have their own heaven; where are fauns supposed to find a place in your heaven, who cavort with nymphs, or swordsmen in the midst of a lunge, or heroes, who in the throes of death, defend themselves against coiling serpents?

**Waller.** Don't forget that we're not speaking about moral perfection, but only about natural perfection, which consists in a thorough development from the inside out, in the exclusion of everything incidental, in the complete significance of the form, and in the agreement of the

Bedeutsamkeit der Gestalt, und der Uebereinstimmung der beseelenden Kraft mit sich selbst, besteht. Was die augenblicklichen, mitunter sehr gewaltsamen Handlungen betrifft, so sind sie immer den Formen untergeordnet, und nur als die angemessenste Entfaltung derselben konnten sie verdienen gewählt zu werden.

**Louise.** Also geben Sie doch zu, daß die Bildnerey auch den Moment verewigen darf?

**Waller.** Sie unterwirft ihn ihren Gesetzen, damit er dessen würdig sey.

**Louise.** Und wodurch wird er das?

**Waller.** Durch Vollendung.

**Louise.** Wie sollte die in einem entfliehenden Theile der Zeit Statt finden können?

**Waller.** Eben so gut wie in einem beschränkten Theile des Raums. Die Bewegung muß, so zu sagen, eben so hoch und rein organisiert seyn, als das Körpergebilde, das sich in ihr darstellt. Maaß, Verhältniß und Gleichgewicht müssen ihr Streben immer wieder in sich zurückdrängen, so wie die strenge Richtigkeit des Umrisses seine Weichheit. Bemerken Sie, daß selbst die gewaltigste Kraftäußerung von einer völlig ruhigen Stellung nur dem Grade, nicht der Art nach verschieden ist. Zur bloßen Haltung des Körpers bey dem Stehen oder Sitzen sind Muskeln in Wirksamkeit: der Gesunde fühlt es freylich nicht, aber er kann es an dem ermattenden Kranken beobachten; der Schlafende liegt anders als der Todte. Das Leben ist von der Bewegung nicht zu trennen: durchaus ruhende Formen würden todtsein.

**Louise.** Und da die Bildhauerkunst in einer so schweren Masse arbeitet, so muß sie sich allerdings an das Lebendige halten, sonst würden die Todten ihre Todten begraben.

**Waller.** Alle Plastik ist entweder organisch oder mathematisch, das heißt, sie läßt in den hervorgebrachten Formen eine beseelte Einheit erkennen, oder mißt sie nach regelmäßigen ergründlichen Verhältnissen ab. Die mathematische Plastik ist die Architektur.

**Louise.** Sie gerathen mir in die Metaphysik der Künste hinein, womit ich nichts zu thun habe. Ich muß nur mit einem Zweifel kommen, um Sie davon abzuhalten. Daß, die leblosen Nebenwerke, welche bloß den Figuren dienen, als Sitze, Stämme zum Anlehnen und dergleichen, den Kreis der Bildnerey nicht erweitern können, begreife ich wohl. Allein wo wollen Sie bey Ihrer organischen Plastik mit den Gewändern hin, die uns ja die Formen zum Theil verbergen und worin doch ein so großer Theil der Vortrefflichkeit liegt?

animating force with itself. With regard to instantaneous, and at times, extremely violent actions, they are always subordinate to the forms, and could solely deserve to be chosen as their most appropriate development.

**Louise.** So you concede that sculpture may also immortalize the moment?

**Waller.** It subjects the moment to its laws, so that it may become worthy of them.

**Louise:** And how does it do that?

**Waller:** Through perfection.

**Louise.** How is that supposed to occur in a fleeting instant of time?

**Waller:** Just as it does in a confined part of space. Movement must be, so to speak, as highly and purely organized as the bodily structures in which it is present. Measure, relation, and equilibrium, all have to continually suppress their striving, just as the strict correctness of the outline does with its malleability. Remember that even the most powerful manifestation of force differs from a place at absolute rest only in degree and not in kind. When standing or sitting, muscles are active for the basic posture of the body: healthy people do not feel this of course, but they can observe it in a fatigued patient; a sleeping person lies differently compared to a dead person. Life cannot be separated from movement: forms at absolute rest would be dead.

**Louise:** In any event, since the art of sculpture works with such heavy masses it has to hold on to the living, otherwise the dead would be burying their dead.

**Waller:** All sculpture is either organic or mathematical, that is to say, it allows us to recognize an animated unity in the produced forms, or it measures them according to regular, comprehensible relationships. Mathematical sculpture is architecture.

**Louise:** You are leading me into the metaphysics of art, with which I have nothing to do. I only have to raise a doubt to prevent you from doing this. I fully understand that lifeless accessory works – those merely serving as seats or trunks for the figures to lean on etc. – cannot expand the horizon of sculpture. But how does clothing fit into your organic sculpture, which partly conceals the forms, and a large part of their excellence is to be attributed to it?

**Waller:** The Greeks, more than any other people, understood the dignity of the body with regard to its clothing. A Roman writer says it is Greek custom not to cover anything. And it would be an attractive inquiry to find out to what extent this manner of thinking has benefited art or even

**Waller.** Die Griechen haben mehr als irgend ein Volk die Würde des Körpers vor seiner Bekleidung erkannt. Nichts verhüllen, sagt ein Römischer Schriftsteller, ist Griechische Sitte; und es wäre eine anziehende Untersuchung, in wie fern diese Denkart der Kunst aufgeholfen hat, oder wiederum von den Künstlern begünstigt worden ist. Diese mußten sich aber doch bey vielen Gegenständen der Schicklichkeit fügen, und man muß sie nur loben, daß sie aus der Noth eine Tugend zu machen gewußt und die Gewänder so meisterhaft behandelt haben.

**Louise.** Für einen Seher antworten sie diesmal nicht sonderlich, lieber Waller.

been favored by artists. However, artists have had to submit themselves to the propriety of countless objects, and we have to praise them for knowing how to make a virtue out of necessity and to have so masterfully treated clothing.

**Louise.** For a seer, you haven't answered strangely this time, dear Waller. [...]



Dorothea Veit-Schlegel, portrait by Anton Graff  
(© Alte Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/Jörg P. Anders)

## DOROTHEA VEIT-SCHLEGEL (1764-1839)

*Dorothea Veit-Schlegel, née Brendel Mendelssohn, was the eldest daughter of the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. Through her father, she grew up knowing outstanding Enlightenment thinkers like Lessing, as well as participating in the literary salons of Berlin. She met Friedrich Schlegel in 1797, and he dedicated to her the essay “Über die Philosophie: An Dorothea” (On Philosophy: to Dorothea), published in 1799 in the romantic journal Athenaeum.<sup>1</sup> She subsequently adopted Dorothea as her first name.*

*A writer, novelist, epistolist, and translator, her most well-known piece of writing is undoubtedly her 1801 novel Florentin.<sup>2</sup> She also wrote review pieces, such as: “Gespräch über die neuesten Romane der Französinen” (Conversation on the Latest Novels by French Women Writers), published in 1803 in Europa, a new journal edited by her husband Friedrich Schlegel.<sup>3</sup>*

*In 1804 she translated from the French and Latin a collection of texts entitled Sammlung romantischer Dichtungen des Mittelalters (A Collection of Romantic Poetic Works from the Middle Ages), which was published with Friedrich Schlegel’s name on it. Volume 1 contains the celebrated story of Merlin the Magician.<sup>4</sup> Another of her most significant achievements as a translator is the four-volume edition into German of Germaine de Staël’s Corrina oder Italien.<sup>5</sup>*

*The following piece is from her time in Jena as a member of the Romantic Circle. It is a review essay entitled: “Moralische Erzählungen von Ramdohr” (Ramdohr’s Moral Tales), which was published in the journal Athenaeum in 1800.<sup>6</sup> It is a critical and at times rather sarcastic review of a series of stories by the writer and art theorist Basilius von Ramdohr.*

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, “Über die Philosophie: An Dorothea”, *Athenaeum*, Band II, 1. Stück (Berlin: Heinrich Fröhlich, 1800), 1-38.

<sup>2</sup> *Florentin. Ein Roman. Herausgegeben von Friedrich Schlegel* (Lübeck & Leipzig: Friedrich Bohn, 1801). See too the more recent edition: Dorothea Schlegel, *Florentin: Roman, Fragmente, Varianten*, ed. Liliane Weissberg (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> “Gespräch über die neuesten Romane der Französinen”, *Europa* 1, 2 (1803): 88–106.

<sup>4</sup> *Sammlung romantischer Dichtungen des Mittelalters. Aus gedruckten und handschriftlichen Quellen.* Herausgegeben von Friedrich Schlegel (Leipzig: In der Juniusischen Buchhandlung, 1804). Vol. 1: Geschichte des Zauberers Merlin.

<sup>5</sup> Germaine de Staël, *Corrina oder Italien.* Aus dem Französischen der Frau von Staël übersetzt und herausgegeben von Friedrich Schlegel, 4 vols. (Berlin: Unger, 1807).

<sup>6</sup> “Moralische Erzählungen von Ramdohr”, *Athenaeum*, Band III, 2. Stück (Berlin: Heinrich Fröhlich, 1800), 238-243.

Dorothea Veit-Schlegel

**Moralische Erzählungen von Ramdohr**

In der ersten der zahlreichen Vorreden, die diese Erzählungen wie eine Brustwehr gegen üble Nachreden den schützen sollen, wird uns ausführlich dargethan, warum sie für moralisch sollen gehalten werden. Sie machen nemlich nicht den mindesten Anspruch auf poetischen Werth: ganz prosaisch und mit sorgfältiger Vermeidung aller blühenden oder gar glühenden Fantasie, gegen welche Jugendsünde der Verfasser nicht genug zu warnen weiß, begnügen sie sich „gebildeten Menschen in verwickelten und seltenen Lagen eindringenden Rath zu ertheilen“ und „einen anschaulichen und sehr speciellen Unterricht zur bessern Einrichtung der Denk- und Handlungsweise im gemeinen Leben zu geben.“ Neben der Belehrung sollen sie auch beyläufig unterhalten, so wie „die Poesie beyläufig zur Veredlung der Sitten mitwirkt.“ — Ob sie nun am Unterhalten durch das Belehrende, oder am Belehren durch das Unterhaltende verhindert werden, kann man so eigentlich nicht wissen: gewiß ist es aber, sie thun weder das eine noch das andere. Uns kommt diese Zwittergattung wohl eigentlich von den Franzosen, die sie *Moral* nennen, weil sie es überhaupt nicht sehr genau mit den philosophischen Benennungen nehmen: denn dies Zergliedern der Charaktere, und dies haarfeine Ausspinnen und beängstigende widersprechende Zerren der unergründlichen Motive gehört ja eher zu dem, was man Psychologie nennt, wofür aber die Franzosen keine Benennung haben; ihre *Contes* nennen sie *moraux*, weil sie nicht *physiques* find. Aus demselben Grunde sind denn auch diese Erzählungen wohl moralisch zu nennen, oder auch *per antiphrasin*, weil alle darin handelnde Personen eben nichts von Moralität wissen.

Eitelkeit und Untreue in der Liebe ist gewöhnlich die Sünde dieser Helden und Heldinnen; Langeweile, Leere des Herzens und oft der bittere Tod ihre Bestrafung: gehen sie aber noch zur rechten Zeit in sich und bessern sich, so führen sie zur irdischen Belohnung ein zufriednes Leben. Eheleute besuchen sich friedlich einander; der Mann sagt der Dame einige Worte sehr delikat ins Ohr, und nikt sie ihm dann freundlich zu, so geht er sehr delikat nicht mit dem Gast nach Hause, welche Maaßregel nicht wenig beyträgt, das gute Vernehmen zu erhalten. Sie gehen auch zusammen ins Theater; dies ist gemeinhin der Ort, wo die sympathetisch fühlenden



Dorothea Veit-Schlegel

### Ramdohr's Moral Tales

In the first of numerous prefaces, which like a military fortification is supposed to protect these tales from malicious gossip, it is comprehensively explained to us why they should be viewed as moral. – It is because they do not make the slightest claim to poetic value: they are entirely prosaic and carefully avoid all flourishing or inflamed fantasy – indeed, the author can scarcely warn us enough about this youthful sin. These tales aim “to provide penetrating advice to educated people in complicated and unusual situations,” and “to supply lucid and highly specialized instruction for improving one’s mode of thinking and acting in everyday life.” In addition to this instruction, they are occasionally intended to entertain us, so that “the poesy contributes in passing to the ennobling of morals.”

It is almost impossible to say whether they hinder the instruction by entertaining, or the entertainment by instructing, but what is clear is that they neither entertain nor instruct. This hermaphrodite is probably what the French call *moral*, since they are so imprecise in their philosophical terminology: for this kind of character analysis, and detailed interweaving of terrifying and contradictory strands of inexplicable motives, belongs more to what is called psychology, and for which the French also lack a name; their contes are called *moraux*, because they are not *physiques*. Consequently, these tales should surely be labelled moral, or even *per antiphrasis*, because none of the characters has any idea about morality.

These heroes and heroines typically commit the sin of vanity and unfaithfulness in love; their punishment is boredom, emptiness of heart, and often a grim death: but if they inwardly contemplate and improve themselves at the right time, their earthly reward is to lead a satisfying life. Married couples visit each other peacefully; the husband delicately whispers a few words in the ear of the lady, and if she nods to him kindly, he very discreetly does not accompany the guest home; these kinds of standards contribute not a little to upholding good decorum. They also go to the theatre together. This is commonly the place where sympathetic and feeling souls meet, and the most opportune moment for lovers or married couples to look deeply into their hearts. How could we object to these moderate people and their sensible way of life?

In the story, *Signora avveduta*, a lady arrives in time to help the narrator, whose carriage has just broken down on a journey. He was in danger of

Seelen sich begegnen, und die beste Gelegenheit für Liebende oder für Eheleute tiefe Blicke in ihre Herzen zu thun. Was kann man gegen so mäßige Menschen und eine so vernünftige Lebensart einwenden? In der einen Erzählung, *Signora avveduta* genannt, kommt eine Dame sehr zur rechten Zeit dem Erzähler zu Hilfe, wie er eben auf einer Reise den Wagen gebrochen hat, und in Gefahr ist, sich mit einem sehr schlechten Nachtlager behelfen zu müßen. Die Dame bietet ihm sogleich äußerst gefällig einen Platz in ihrem Wagen an, und erzählt ihm, indem sie fahren, etwas unbesonnen und lebhaft ihre Geschichte, die eben so unbesonnen und lebhaft ist. Sie ist aber recht artig diese Geschichte; man weiß es der guten Dame vielen Dank, daß sie nicht langweilig ist, und man glaubt gewiß, der Aufgenommene werde sich nicht weniger dankbar zeigen. Statt dessen giebt er ihr aber im Ton der den Fabeln angehängten Nutzenanwendung eine recht derbe Lection, und endigt so die niedliche Erzählung. Wundern könnte es einen nicht, wenn die Dame den Schlag geöffnet, den Moralisten eben so artig aus dem Wagen gewiesen, und ihn auf freiem Felde hätte stehen lassen. Wer wird auf Kosten der Höflichkeit moralisiren wollen?

Herr von Ramdohr besitzt nicht allein tiefe Menschenkenntniß; sondern auch eben so tiefe Götterkenntniß. In Daphne und Apollo hat dieser Kenner und Zergliederer der Leidenschaften die alten Götter haarscharf charakterisirt, und ihr gewaltiges Wollen richtig motivirt. Apollo's Hirtenleben und seine Liebe zur Daphne ist zu einer sehr delikaten Hofintrigue ausgebildet, worin Apollo die Rolle eines ziemlich lockern Pagen, Jupiter die eines Erziehers nach den neuesten pädagogischen Grundsätzen spielt, und worin die Anekdote mit der Elytie dreist mit verwebt ist. Wie in aller Welt können Personen, die sich so bürgerlich ausnehmen, auf einmal ganz genialisch sich in Sonnenblume und Lorbeer verwandeln? Diese Erzählung schließt mit dem Ausruf, „o Rousseau! o Petrarca!“ — O Apollo! o Ramdohr! möchte man rufen. So sehr der moralische Erzähler auch bemüht ist, die Auswüchse seiner jugendlichen Fantasie, als ungeziemend für Dichtungen dieser Art zu unterdrücken, und so oft er auch gegen eine lebhaftere Einbildungskraft als die Quelle vieles menschlichen Elendes warnt, so kann er ihrer doch nicht immer Meister bleiben. Der Aufenthalt am Garigliano war ursprünglich wohl nur zum Bekanntwerden mit den vier Damen bestimmt, welche zum Gegenstück für Humes vier Philosophen-sekten, als Repräsentantinnen der vier weiblichen Glückseligkeitssysteme auftreten: dennoch trifft man hier ein Paar unartige überlästige Passagiere, die zwar dem Erzähler damals viel Langeweile machten, aber mit dem Zweck in gar keiner Verbindung

having to make do with a terrible lodging for the night. The lady is accommodating and immediately offers him a seat in her carriage. During the trip she relates – somewhat rashly and lively – her story, which is likewise rash and lively. However, this tale is rather lovely; we are grateful that the good lady is not boring, and we are sure that the man who has been given a seat will be just as grateful. But instead, he gives her a good talking to in the same tone as a list of instructions appended to a fable, and the pleasant tale ends in this way. It actually would have been unsurprising if the lady had opened the door and pleasantly ordered the moralist out of the carriage, leaving him standing in the countryside. For what sort of person moralizes in the face of hospitality?

Herr von Ramdohr not only possesses a profound knowledge of human nature but an equally profound knowledge of the gods. In Daphne and Apollo this expert and analyzer has minutely characterized the passions of the old gods and correctly discerned the motivations for their powerful will. Apollo's pastoral life and love for Daphne become a subtle courtly intrigue, in which Apollo takes on the role of a fairly loose page. Jupiter is an educator abreast of the latest pedagogical principles, and the anecdote with Elytie is cheekily interwoven in the story. But how on earth can people who seem so bourgeois suddenly become ingeniously transformed into sun flowers and laurel leaves? This tale closes with the cry: "Oh Rousseau! Oh Petrarch!" – We would like to shout: Oh Apollo! Oh Ramdohr! However much the moralistic narrator would like to try and suppress the excesses of his youthful fantasy because it is inappropriate for poetic works of this kind, and however much he'd like to warn us against the lively imagination as the source of so much human misery, he does not always remain its master. Originally the stay in Garigliano was probably only undertaken to become acquainted with the four ladies who make an appearance as the counterpart to Hume's four philosophical sects, as representatives of the four female systems of blessedness: yet here we meet a pair of mischievous superfluous passengers, who although they caused the narrator great boredom at the time, have nothing to do with the plot, except as the uncontrollable stirring of the imagination recollecting that boredom. The terrible effects of fantasy are therefore confirmed; and don't we have every reason to fear it if it can wreak such havoc on the outskirts of the Lüneburg Heath? To a certain extent – and certainly against the author's honest intentions – fantasy also came into play in the biographies of these ladies! Despite this, these four tales are among the best in the entire collection. Only we have to forget that they wish to be more than clever tales, that they are meant to present philosophical antitheses.

stehen, bloß als unaufhaltbare Regung der Fantasie bei der Erinnerung an jene Langeweile. So werden die schrecklichen Folgen der Fantasie bestätigt; und was darf man nicht von ihr fürchten, wenn sie noch an den Grenzen der Lüneburger Heide solche Unordnungen anrichtet? Sie war auch einigermaßen, und gewiß gegen die redliche Absicht des Verfassers in den Biographien der Damen mit ins Spiele! Aber trotz ihr gehören diese vier Erzählungen zu den besten in der ganzen Sammlung. Nur muß man zu vergessen suchen, daß sie mehr als artige Erzählungen seyn, daß sie philosophische Gegensätze vorstellen sollen.

Als Anhang, und geflissentlich von den moralischen Erzählungen getrennt, erscheint: Oduardo und seine Tochter. Es wäre viel besser gewesen ihn nicht von jenen zu trennen; er ist ganz und gar nicht davon verschieden, und man hätte denn doch besser gewußt, was man von ihm denken soll. Den handelnden Personen hätten nur andere Nahmen sollen gegeben werden: denn daß sie die Nahmen des Lessingschen Trauerspiels tragen, erläutert weiter nichts, sondern es erinnert nur ohngefähr eben so daran, als ob man ganz wohlbekannte Marionetten in ein und demselben Kostüme und mit denselben Masken erst ein heroisches Stück aufführen und gleich darauf dasselbe Stück in einem pantomimischen Karikatur-Ballet vorstellen sähe. Appius und Virginia in ein bürgerliches Trauerspiel zu verwandeln, ist gewiß eine verfehlte Idee, und schon oft mit Recht getadelt worden. Auch Herr von Ramdohr hat das Unschickliche darin gefühlt: aber wie vornehm erscheint doch Lessings Einkleidung der Virginia gegen diese Travestirung der Emilia Galotti! Emilia vermählt an den elenden verhaßten Marinelli; ihr Vater durch eine Verbannung von ihr getrennt; der Fürst ein wahres Ungeheuer an Bosheit und niedriger Verderbtheit; Orfina sehr interessirt, und eifrig bemüht Emilien verführt zu sehen, und einige hinzugedichtete verwirrte und verwirrende Menschen als Umgebung: dies alles macht es dem bedrängten Vater freylich nothwendig seine Tochter zu ermorden, besonders da er in dem Augenblick sieht, sie wollte ihn zu Gunsten ihres Verführers verrathen. So ist freylich die Katastrophe vortrefflich motivirt, dafür aber auch das Ganze vortrefflich entmotivirt. — Schade, daß die Mutter Claudia weggeblieben ist! sie sagt im Trauerspiele ein paar Worte, die hier sehr gut passen würden: „O wenn das die Menschen kennen heißt, wer wollte wünschen sie zu kennen!“ —

Die bescheidene Furcht, welche der Verfasser am Ende der erwähnten Vorrede wegen des Ausspruchs der Kenner äußert, ist gewiß sehr ungegründet. Herr von Ramdohr wage sich getrost ferner an Dichtungen dieser Art!

The appendix contains – casually separated from the moral tales – the story of Oduardo and his daughter. It would have been much better not to have separated it from the others; it is not at all different from them, and we would have better known what to make of it. The characters should have been given different names: it is not illuminating to name them after Lessing’s tragedy. They only slightly recall it. It is like seeing familiar marionettes in the same costume and with the same masks in a heroic play, then immediately performing it again as a pantomimic caricature ballet. Turning Appius and Virginia into a bourgeois tragedy was undoubtedly a bad idea, and it is good that it has been roundly criticized. Even Herr von Ramdohr felt that it was unseemly: but how refined does Lessing’s clothing of Virginia appear compared to this travesty of Emilia Galotti! Emilia is married to the miserable and despised Marinelli; her father is separated from her by banishment; the prince is an utter monster of malice and base depravity; Orfina is keen and eager to see Emilia seduced, and is surrounded by a few fictionally confused and confusing people: all this clearly makes it necessary for the harassed father to murder his daughter, especially since he realizes at that moment that she wants to betray him in favour of her seducer. This disaster is excellently motivated on the one hand, but the whole of it is demotivating on the other. – It is a pity that the mother Claudia stayed away! She says a few choice words in the tragedy that would fit right in here: “If this is what it means to know human beings, then who would want to know them!” –

The humble fears expressed by the author at the end of the above-mentioned preface on account of the critiques of experts is certainly unfounded. Herr von Ramdohr should feel completely free to continue writing poetic works of this kind!



Ritratto di Karoline von Günderrode da Charlotte von Günderrode  
(© Historisches Museum Frankfurt)

## KAROLINE VON GÜNDERRODE (1780-1806)

*“Com’è glorioso l’uomo, egli costruisce il proprio destino / Solo la quantità delle sue forze pone le regole per raggiungere il suo fine / Il destino della donna, ah! Non è nelle sue mani!”<sup>1</sup> questa frase è pronunciata da Hildgund, protagonista dell’omonima opera teatrale scritta da Karoline von Günderrode nel 1805. In quanto donna, forse anche Günderrode non si sentiva completamente padrona del proprio destino: basti pensare che dovette firmare e pubblicare alcuni suoi scritti sotto pseudonimo (‘Tian’ o ‘Ion’), in quanto era comune a quell’epoca accusare le donne scrittrici di vanità e di mancanza di pudore e modestia.*

*Poetessa ammirata da Clemens Brentano, Bettina von Arnim e Goethe, tra gli altri, la sua opera è scarsamente conosciuta al giorno d’oggi. Tra le cause principali di questo oblio c’è anche il peso della sua biografia e delle narrazioni che la dipinsero come figura tragica: prima fra tutte il racconto del suo suicidio contenuto in una sezione di Goethe’s Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde<sup>2</sup> (1835) ad opera della sua amica Bettina von Arnim. Questo ha contribuito a velare di grigio la sua opera e la sua figura; leggendo le sue opere, però, quel tetro colore scompare immediatamente. Non solo le sue opere teatrali e le sue poesie sono ricolme di passioni, di tentativi – eroici e tragici allo stesso tempo – di mutare il destino dell’uomo, ma i suoi scritti di-mostrano un interesse per la natura e una vivacità di pensiero che mal si conciliano con l’immagine di una poetessa attanagliata dal pensiero della morte.*

*Uno dei temi centrali della sua riflessione era infatti il concetto di vita,<sup>3</sup> nozione a suggello dello stretto legame tra l’uomo e la natura. Seguendo la declinazione data da Günderrode a questo concetto, l’esistenza di ogni singolo essere determinato non si interrompe con l’esalazione dell’ultimo respiro o con il dissolvimento della propria individualità. In quanto parte della natura, esso riprende vita in nuove forme, la cui generazione scandisce il progressivo perfezionamento dell’universo. Questo è ben descritto nel breve testo che pubblichiamo qui per la prima volta in italiano, in cui i*

*riferimenti alla filosofia di Schelling si mescolano a riferimenti alla filosofia orientale: l'Idée della Terra (1805-1806), pubblicato dopo la sua morte.*

*Lo stretto legame tra uomo e natura ritorna anche nelle sue opere teatrali, unite da un fil rouge che si annoda nelle vicende dei protagonisti. Essi lottano per affermare il proprio volere sulla storia, ma questa si rivela seguire una necessità vicina al determinismo naturale. I protagonisti vorrebbero farsi beffe del destino, ma dovranno presto ricredersi. Come Ligares, uno dei personaggi di Magia e Destino (1805) che si pentirà di aver deriso il padre per aver sostenuto che “le stelle non ruotano perché gli uomini agiscono / Bensì gli uomini girovagano seguendo il loro cammino”.<sup>4</sup> E come Maometto, il quale, secondo il coro di Maometto. Il profeta della Mecca (1805), “privo di volontà e di consapevolezza / sembrava abbandonato a forze più alte / che riempivano il suo petto”.<sup>5</sup>*

*I suoi scritti sono il frutto di un costante rapporto anche con la filosofia sia europea sia orientale. L'interesse per il pensiero orientale ritorna in una buona parte delle opere di Günderrode. Tra tutti in Storia di un Bramino<sup>6</sup> (1805), pubblicato sotto lo pseudonimo ‘Tian’ nell’Herbsttage di Sophie La Roche, oppure in Udohla. In due atti,<sup>7</sup> cui sottostà la stessa cosmologia alla base di Idea della Terra.*

*Aveva però piena confidenza anche con la filosofia europea del suo tempo. Grazie all'edizione critica della sua opera a cura di Walter Morgenthaler è possibile consultare non solo i suoi scritti inediti, ma anche alcuni appunti presi da Günderrode a uso personale. Da qui è possibile de-durre la vastità delle sue fonti di riflessione: Novalis, Fr. Schlegel, Fichte, Hemsterhuis, solo per nominarne alcuni. Ma nella sua opera è evidente anche l'influenza di Schelling (soprattutto la sua Naturphilosophie) e di Schleiermacher (in particolare i suoi Rede über die Religion).*

*Nonostante sia possibile leggere traduzioni in italiano di alcune sue opere,<sup>8</sup> Karoline von Günderrode resta tutt'ora pressoché sconosciuta in Italia. Negli ultimi anni, soprattutto grazie al lavoro di traduzione e divulgazione da parte di Anna C. Ezekiel, la sua filosofia sta acquistando, almeno nel mondo anglosassone, una maggiore visibilità. Sua è la traduzione del primo testo che pubblichiamo qui: A Persian Tale. La pubblicazione di questi versi, scritti presumibilmente nel febbraio 1806, era prevista per lo stesso anno all'interno di un volume intitolato Melete contenente anche altre poesie di Günderrode, che in tale occasione si sarebbe firmata con lo pseudonimo “Ion”. Apparvero invece per la prima volta nel 1896 nel carteggio tra la filosofa e Friedrich Creuzer, pubblicato in un'edizione a cura di Erich Rohde.<sup>9</sup> Da questo carteggio prendiamo le seguenti parole che Creuzer scrisse a Günderrode a proposito di Eine persische Erzählung: “Nel Racconto persiano l'idea è profonda e toccante. Il canto è veramente orientale. ... Permettimi di esporti qui un giudizio sulla tua poesia. Nel suo elemento principale essa è, mi sembra, mistica e rivelatrice (e per questo la amo così tanto). Ecco perché sei a casa in Oriente e perché il grande*



*spirito della natura (il quale considerò la silenziosa maestà dell'antica India come la più degna della sua incarnazione) ti mostra spesso senza veli il suo volto.*<sup>910</sup>

Karoline von Günderrode, „Eine persische Erzählung“, in *Sämtliche Werke und ausgewählte Studien*, hrsg. von Morgenthaler, Bd. 1, Frankfurt a.M., Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1990, S. 331-332.

### **Eine persische Erzählung**

Rasend am Altar des Feuers  
Ormuzd Priester war geworden;  
Aber als der Morgen helle  
Gülden aus dem Osten blickte,  
Kehrte Ruh in seine Seele.  
Laut rief er dem Opferknaben:  
»Siehe wie der Morgen pranget.  
Licht hat endlich obgesieget,  
Siegend werden nie zur Erde  
Wieder sich die Schatten senken.«  
Trost erfüllet sprachs der Alte,  
Kniete nieder am Altare,  
Betend auf zum Gott des Lichtes  
Preißend ihn, des frohen Sieges,  
Angethan in hellen Kleidern  
Zwölf der Stunden täglich feiern.  
Aber als die Zwölf im Weste  
Trübe sich begunt zu färben,  
Leis verglomm im Abendstrahle,  
Ormuzd Priester ward da stille,  
Sorgend blickt er auf zum Himmel  
Forschend was die Zeit gebähre. –  
Dunkel kam heran geschritten,  
Zagend streift es, blaß und ängstlich,  
Muthig ward's dann, dehnt sich mächtig,  
Wuchs und deckt mit Riesengliedern  
Siegreich bald die niedren Thäler,  
Reiht sich um den Stern des Tages,  
Drängt ihn hastig hin zum Weste. –  
Ormuzd Priester rief der Sonne,  
Tapfer sich im Kampf zu zeigen,  
Heftig rief er, Wahnsinn betend.  
Aber das Gestirn des Lichtes  
Bettet sich im Weste stille.

**A Persian Tale**

On the fire-altar, Ormuzd's priest  
 Had been raving;  
 But when the bright morning  
 Glanced golden from the east,  
 Peace swept into his soul.  
 Aloud he cried to the acolyte:  
 "See the resplendent morning.  
 Light has finally prevailed,  
 Never again will shadows sink  
 Victoriously upon the earth."  
 Filled with comfort the old man spoke,  
 Knelt at the altar,  
 Praying to the god of light  
 Giving praise for the joyful victory,  
 Clad in pale clothes to celebrate  
 Twelve of the day's hours.  
 But when the twelfth hour  
 Grew dim and tinted in the west,  
 And softly died away in evening rays,  
 Then Ormuzd's priest was silent,  
 Worried, he gazed up to the sky  
 Seeking what time would deliver. –  
 Darkness drew closer, hesitating  
 It spread in streaks, faint and fearful,  
 Then became bold, expanded mightily.  
 Grew and triumphantly covered  
 The lower valleys with giant limbs,  
 Gathered around the daytime star,  
 Drove it hurrying to the west. –  
 Ormuzd's priest called to the sun  
 To be valiant in its struggle,  
 Fiercely he called, praying madness.  
 But the star of light  
 Settled silently in the west.

Rasend, zitternd, sah's der Alte  
Raffte sich empor vom Boden  
Eilte nach dem nahen Meere. –  
Glänzend aus der Fluthen Spiegel  
Luna kam heraufgeschritten;  
Feucht ihr Haar, vom Meer noch träuflend,  
Thaubeglänzet ihre Wange,  
Blickte sie zur Erde nieder.  
Da ergrimte Ormuzd Priester,  
Nahm den Bogen, nahm die Pfeile,  
Eilte zu des Felsen Gipfel,  
Achtet nicht der schroffen Höhe,  
Drunten nicht des Meeres Brausen,  
Nimmt der Pfeile schärfsten, zieleet  
Hoch zum Mond, dem Herz der Nächte;  
Schwirrend reißt ihn da die Senne  
Seines Bogens hin zur Tiefe,  
Sterbend büßt er sein Erkühen. –  
Mitleidsvoll ihm Mitra lächlet;  
Aber gütig nimmt das Dunkel  
Auf in seinem heil'gen Schooße  
Freundlich den verirrtten Kranken,  
Daß im Arm der Mitternächte  
Schweren Wahnsinns er geneset.

Raving, trembling, the old man saw this  
Picked himself up from the ground  
Hurried to the nearby ocean. –  
Gleaming from the tide's mirror  
Luna came striding up  
Her hair damp, still dripping from the sea,  
Her cheeks sparkling with dew,  
She gazed down at the earth.  
Then Ormuzd's priest grew angry,  
Took his bow, took his arrows,  
Hurried to the crest of the cliffs,  
Not heeding the rugged height,  
Nor the ocean's roar below,  
Takes the sharpest arrow, aims it  
High at the moon, heart of the night;  
Then, whirring, his bowstring sends it  
Racing into the depths,  
Dying, he atones for his audacity. –  
Full of pity Mithra smiles on him;  
But benignly the darkness gathers  
The straying invalid  
Kindly into its holy womb,  
So in the embrace of midnights  
He may recover from deep madness.

Karoline von Günderrode, *Idee der Erde*, in *Sämtliche Werke und ausgewählte Studien*, hrsg. von Morgenthaler, Bd. 1, Frankfurt a.M., Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1990, p. 446-449.

### **Idee der Erde**

[446] Die Erde ist eine realisierte Idee, ein zugleich wirkendes (kraft) und gewirktes (Erscheinung) also eine Einheit von Seele und Leib, denjenigen einen Pol ihrer Tätigkeit den sie nach außen wendet nennen wir Extensität, Form, Körper, den sie nach Innen kehrt, Intensität, Wesen, Kraft, Seele. Wie nun die Ganzheit der Erde nur ist durch diese Vereinigung von Seele und Leib so besteht auch das Einzelne und Kleinste nur durch sie und kann es als entzweit gar nicht gedacht werden denn ein Äußeres ohne ein Inneres ein Wesen ohne Form, eine Kraft ohne irgend eine Wirkung ist nicht begreiflich. So sind die Elemente die Pole dieses identischen Erdwesens, jedes Einzelne in sich selbst Leib und Seele doch in verschiedenen Verhältnisse beider, so dass der geistige oder leibliche Pol überwiegend sein kann. Die innigste Vermischung verschiedener Elemente mit dem höchsten Grad der Berührung und Anziehung nennen wir Leben; zu welcher Vollkommenheit es sich nun auch entwickelt haben mag so ist es doch nur das Produkt der Synthesis lebensschwangerer Elemente, und mit der Auflösung dieser Synthesis hört auch das Produkt auf, aber das Lebens Prinzip in den Elementen ist unsterblich, es bedarf nur wieder eine Berührung und Verknüpfung wie die vorige und das neue Leben erblühet mit allen Blüten die wir Gedanke und Empfindung, und Organismus und Leib und Seele nennen.

So ist das Leben unsterblich und wogt auf und nieder in den Elementen denn sie sind das Leben selbst, das bestimmte und einzelne Leben aber ist nur eine durch diese bestimmte Verknüp[447]fung, Anziehung und Berührung gegebne Lebensform, welche nicht länger dauern kann als eben die Verknüpfung.

Wenn nun der Mensch Tod ist kehrt seine Mischung in die Erds substanz zurück aber was in ihr dasjenige war welche wir als Kraft, Tätigkeit bezeichneten, oder vielmehr diejenige seiner Stoffe in welchen der tätiger Pol überwog, kehren wieder zu den ihnen verwandteren in der Erde über; die größeren Elemente suchen gleichfalls die Ähnlichen auf nach Gesetzen der Verwandtschaft; anders aber sind diese Elemente geworden nachdem sie einmal im Organismus zum Leben hinauf getrieben waren, als sie waren, ehe sie in die organische Verknüpfung traten, d.h. sie sind lebendiger

## Idea della Terra

La Terra è un'idea realizzata, allo stesso tempo qualcosa di agente (forza) e di agito (fenomeno), cioè un'unità di anima e corpo. Chiamiamo estensione, forma, o corpo quel polo della sua attività che essa volge verso l'esterno, invece quello che essa volge verso l'interno lo chiamiamo intensità, essere, forza, anima. Se però la Terra è un intero solo attraverso questa unione di anima e corpo, così anche la singolarità e ciò che è più piccolo esistono solo attraverso tale unione e non possono essere pensati come scissi poiché non è concepibile un esterno senza un interno, un essere senza una forma, una forza senza un qualche effetto. Gli elementi sono quindi i poli di questo identico essere terrestre, ogni singolo in sé stesso corpo e anima – certo con diversi equilibri tra questi due, così che il polo spirituale o corporeo possa prevalere. Chiamiamo vita la strettissima commistione di diversi elementi tra i quali sussista il massimo grado di contatto e attrazione; indipendentemente dal grado di completezza raggiunto nel proprio sviluppo, la vita è solo il prodotto della sintesi tra elementi gravidi di vita, e con il disgregarsi di questa sintesi si dissolve anche il suo prodotto. Tuttavia, il principio vitale negli elementi è immortale: c'è solo bisogno che si dia nuovamente un contatto o una connessione (come precedentemente alla dissoluzione della sintesi) e la nuova vita fiorisce con tutti i suoi boccioli che noi chiamiamo pensieri, sensazioni, organismo, corpo e anima.

La vita è quindi immortale e oscilla su e giù negli elementi poiché essi sono la vita stessa. Tuttavia, la vita determinata e singolare è solo una forma di vita data da questa connessione, questa attrazione e questo contatto determinati, e non può durare un istante in più rispetto alla connessione stessa.

Ora, quando l'essere umano muore, l'amalgama che lo compone torna nella sostanza terrestre, ma ciò che noi in esso indicavamo come forza e attività, o meglio, quelle sue componenti in cui predominava il polo più attivo ritornano verso le materie che nella terra sono loro più affini; parimenti, gli elementi più grossolani vanno in cerca dei propri simili seguendo la legge delle affinità; dopo esser stati portati alla vita nell'organismo, però, questi elementi sono mutati rispetto a come erano prima di

geworden, und vermehren indem sie zur Erde zurückgehen das Erdleben, wie Zwei die in langem Kampf ihre Kraft stählten stärker sind wenn der Kampf geendet hat als sie zuvor waren; so die Elemente denn sie sind lebendig, und die lebendige Kraft stärkt sich in jeder Übung, jede Form aber die sie hervorbrachten ist ihnen nur eine Entwicklung ihres Lebensprinzips. Die Erde gebiert aber den ihr zurückgegebenen Lebensstoff in immer neuen Erscheinungen wieder, bis durch immer neue Verwandlungen alles lebensfähige in ihr ist lebendig geworden, dies wäre wenn alle Massen organisch würden, dann erst wäre die Idee der Erde realisiert.

So gibt jeder Sterbende der Erde ein erhöhteres, entwickleteres Elementarleben zurück welches sie in aufsteigenden Formen fort bildet und der Organismus indem er immer entwickeltere Elemente in sich aufnimmt muss dadurch immer vollkommener und allgemeiner werden. So wird die Allheit lebendig durch den Untergang der Einzelheit, und die Einzelheit lebt unsterblich fort in der Allheit deren leben sie lebend entwickelte, und nach dem Tod selbst erhöht und mehrt; und so durch leben und sterben die Idee der Erde realisieren hilft. Wie also auch meine Elemente zerstreut werden mögen, wenn sie sich zu schon lebendem gesellen, werden sie es erhöhen, wann zu dem dessen leben noch dem Tod gleicht, so werden sie es beseelen. Die Idee [448] der Indier von der Seelenwanderung entspricht dieser Meinung, und dann erst dürfen die Lebenselemente nicht mehr wandern und suchen, wann die Erde die ihr angemessene Existenz die Organische, durchgehens erlangt hat alle bis jetzt hervorgebrachte Formen des Organismus müssen aber dem Erdgeist nicht genügen weil er sie immer wieder zerbricht und neue sucht, da doch die dem Wesen ganz identische Form nicht von diesem zerbrochen werden könnte weil sie ihm ganz gleich, und von ihm untrennbar wäre; diese vollkommene Einheit des Wesens und der Form kann überhaupt nicht in der Vereinzelnung und Mannigfaltigkeit erreicht werden, denn eben durch diese wird die Form verschieden von dem Wesen, indem das Wesen nur eins sein kann, die Formen aber verschieden sind. Das ihr angemessene Dasein kann also die Erde nur dann erlangen wenn ihre organische und unorganische Erscheinungen sich in einem gemeinschaftlichen Organismus auflösen, indem die beiden Faktoren Sein (Körper) und Denken (Geist) sich bis zur Ununterscheidbarkeit durchdringen, wo aller Leib auch zugleich Gedanke, alles Denken auch zugleich Leib wäre, und ein wahrhaft verklärter Leib, ohne Fehl und Krankheit und unsterblich, also gänzlich verschieden von dem was wir Leib oder Materie nennen, und ihm Vergänglichkeit, Trägheit, Krankheit und Mangelhaftigkeit beilegen, denn diese Art von Leib ist gleichsam nur ein



legarsi organicamente. Sono cioè diventati più vitali e tornando alla terra accrescono la vita terrestre, come due rivali che in una lunga lotta hanno temprato la loro forza e al termine del combattimento sono più forti rispetto a prima; gli elementi sono quindi viventi, la forza vitale si corrobora in ogni esercizio, ma ogni forma che essi hanno prodotto è per loro solo uno sviluppo del loro principio vitale. La Terra però partorisce ancora, in sempre nuovi fenomeni, la materia vitale che le è stata restituita, fino a quando attraverso sempre rinnovate metamorfosi avrà preso vita tutto ciò che è fertile. Questo accadrebbe nel momento in cui tutte le masse diventassero organiche, e solo allora sarebbe realizzata l'idea della Terra.

Così tutto ciò che muore restituisce alla Terra una vita elementare più elevata e maggiormente sviluppata, che essa continua a plasmare in forme ascendenti e l'organismo, accogliendo in sé elementi sempre più sviluppati, deve pertanto diventare sempre più perfetto e universale. La totalità prende così vita attraverso il tramonto della singolarità, che continua a vivere immortale nella totalità, la cui vita venne sviluppata dalla singolarità stessa, vivendo, e venne incrementata e sviluppata ancora da essa dopo la propria morte; e così, attraverso il suo vivere e morire la singolarità ha aiutato a realizzare l'idea della Terra. Per quanto quindi i miei elementi possano venire distrutti, se essi si annettono a ciò che è già vivente, essi lo eleveranno, se si uniscono a ciò la cui vita è ancora uguale alla morte, essi lo animeranno. L'idea proveniente dall'India della trasmigrazione delle anime equivale a questa opinione, e quando la Terra avrà raggiunto stabilmente l'esistenza a lei adeguata, cioè l'organico, solo allora gli elementi vitali potranno smettere di vagare e cercare. Dato che lo spirito frantuma continuamente le forme dell'organismo e costantemente ne cerca di nuove, quelle create fino ad ora non devono essergli sufficienti: infatti la forma completamente identica all'essere non può essere spezzata da questo, in quanto la forma sarebbe completamente identica all'essere e da esso inseparabile; questa perfetta unità dell'essere e della forma non può assolutamente essere raggiunta nella singolarità e nella molteplicità, poiché attraverso queste due la forma è diversa dall'essere, e mentre l'essere è uno, le forme sono invece plurime. La Terra può raggiungere l'esistenza ad essa adeguata solo quando i suoi fenomeni organici e inorganici si dissolvono in un organismo comune, in cui entrambi i fattori – l'essere (il corpo) e il pensiero (Spirito) – si permeano fino ad essere indistinguibili, in cui ogni corpo sarebbe contemporaneamente anche pensiero, ogni pensiero anche contemporaneamente corpo – un corpo veridicamente illuminato, immortale, senza difetti e malattia, quindi totalmente diverso da ciò che noi chiamiamo corpo o materia, e a

missglückter Versuch der Natur jenen unsterblichen ideellen Leib hervor zu bringen; ob es der Erde überhaupt gelingen wird sich so unsterblich zu organisieren behaupte ich nicht, es kann in ihren Urelementen ein Missverhältnis von Wesen und Form sein dass sie immer daran hindert, und vielleicht gehört gerade die Totalität unsers ganzen Sonnensystems dazu die Aufgabe zu lösen; und vielleicht recht dieses wiederum nicht hinzu und es ist eine Aufgabe für das gesamte Universum. Die Wahrheit ist der Ausdruck des sich immer selbst gleichseins; die Gerechtigkeit ist das Streben der Allheit in der Einzelheit sich selbst gleich zu sein; Schönheit ist das sich selbst gleich und harmonisch sein; Liebe, Güte, Barmherzigkeit, ist das Sehnen der Einzelheit sich in der Allheit zu genießen, d.h. der Allheit in [449] der Einzelheit inne zu werden, und die Persönlichkeit verleugnend sich der Allheit hin zu geben. Was aber immer sich selbst gleich, mit sich harmonisch, nicht in die Einzelheit zerrissen ist, das ist unsterblich, ohne Wandel und Krankheit, kurz es ist dasjenige was ich als die realisierte Idee der Erde (oder des Universums) bezeichnet habe; alle einzelne Tugenden und Trefflichkeiten sind also bloß Bestrebungen des Erdgeistes sich jenem Zustand (so viel noch in der Einzelheit geschehen kann) näher zu bringen, durch jegliche Wahrheit, Gerechtigkeit, Schönheit und Tugend, wird er sich selbst gleicher, harmonischer, und von den Banden der Persönlichkeit freier, durch jede Tat der Ungerechtigkeit, Unwahrheit und Selbstsucht wird jener Zustand entfernt, und der Gott der Erde in Fesseln geschlagen, der seine Sehn-sucht nach besserem Leben in jedem Gemüt durch Empfänglichkeit für das Vortreffliche ausspricht.

cui attribuiamo transitorietà, inerzia, malattia e molteplicità, poiché questo è in un certo senso solo un tentativo sfortunato della natura di creare quel corpo ideale e immortale. Non sostengo che la terra riuscirà mai ad organizzarsi in tal modo imperituro, può darsi che ci sia nei suoi elementi originari una disparità tra essere e forma che le impedirà sempre di raggiungere tale organizzazione, e forse risolvere questo problema è un compito che spetta alla totalità del nostro intero sistema solare; e d'altronde probabilmente non spetta nemmeno a lui, ed è un incarico per l'universo intero. La verità è l'espressione dell'essere sempre uguale a sé; la giustizia è l'aspirazione della totalità ad essere uguale a sé nella singolarità; la bellezza equivale all'essere armonico ed uguali a sé stessi; l'amore, il bene, la misericordia sono il desiderio della singolarità di godere di sé nella totalità, cioè il desiderio di prendere consapevolezza della totalità nella singolarità, di darsi alla totalità negando la personalità. Ciò che però è sempre identico a sé, armonico con sé, ciò che non è lacerato nella singolarità è immortale, privo di mutamenti o malattie; in breve, è ciò che io ho indicato come l'idea rea-lizzata della Terra (o dell'universo); tutte le singole virtù ed eccellenze non sono altro che sforzi dello spirito della Terra per avvicinarsi a quella condizione (per quanto ciò possa avvenire nella singolarità). Attraverso ogni verità, giustizia, bellezza e virtù tale spirito diventa sempre più uguale a sé, più armonico e sempre più libero dai legami della personalità; attraverso ogni atto di ingiustizia, falsità ed egoismo si allontana da quella condizione, e il Dio della Terra (che manifesta la sua nostalgia per una vita migliore in ogni animo, attraverso la sensibilità per la perfezione) viene incatenato.

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<sup>1</sup> Karoline von Günderrode, *Hildgund*, in Karoline von Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke und ausgewählte Studien. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe* [=GSW], vol. 1, hrsg. von Walter Morgenthaler, Basel–Frankfurt a.M., Stroemfeld–Roter Stern, 1990, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Bettina von Arnim, *Goethe's Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde*, in Bettina von Arnim, *Werke und Briefe in 4 Bände*, vol. 2, hrsg. von Walter Schmitz, Sybille von Steinsdorff, Frankfurt a.M., Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992, p. 63-84.

<sup>3</sup> “The word ‘life’ (*Leben*) and its cognates is the most frequently used word overall in Günderrode’s writings, with more instances than ‘love’ (*lieben*) or ‘death’ and ‘die’ (*Tod, sterben*)”, Anna Ezekiel, “Life” in *Karoline von Günderrode (1780-1806)*, in *ECC: Encyclopedia of Concise Concepts by Women Philosophers*, Paderborn, Universitätsbibliothek, 2020, consultabile al link: <https://digital.ub.uni-paderborn.de/doi/10.17619/UNIPB/1-932>.

<sup>4</sup> Karoline von Günderrode, *Magie und Schicksal*, GSW 1, p. 235.

<sup>5</sup> Karoline von Günderrode, *Mahomed, der Prophet von Mekka*, GSW 1, p. 122.

<sup>6</sup> Karoline von Günderrode, *Geschichte eines Braminen*, GSW 1, p. 303-314.

<sup>7</sup> Karoline von Günderrode, *Udhola*, GSW 1, p. 203-231.

<sup>8</sup> Alcuni suoi brevi scritti sono consultabili in italiano grazie alla traduzione del volume di Christa Wolf dedicata a Karoline von Günderrode *L'ombra di un sogno. Prose, poesie, lettere di Karoline von Günderrode*, trad. di Vanda Perretta, Milano, La Tartaruga, 1984 e all'antologia di Claudia Buffagni, Renata Gambino, *Poetesse tedesche del tempo romantico: Elise Sommer, Sophie Mereau, Sophie Bernhardt, Amalie von Imhoff, Karoline von Günderrode, Charlotte von Ahlefeld, Marianne von Willemer, Luise Hensel*, Firenze, Nardini, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Friedrich Creuzer, Karoline von Günderrode, *Briefe und Dichtungen*, a cura di Erich Rohde, Heidelberg, 1896.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Creuzer a Karoline von Günderrode, 20.2.1806, in GSW 3, p. 190-191.





Ritratto di Bettina von Arnim seduta su una poltrona, statua di Goethe sullo sfondo. 1838, acquaforte di Ludwig Emil Grimm (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

## BETTINA VON ARNIM (1785-1859)

*Se nell'800 le donne in Germania avevano ancora insormontabili difficoltà ad assumere un ruolo nella sfera pubblica al di fuori dello spazio domestico, Bettina von Arnim decise di rendere pubblico il privato, pubblicando la propria corrispondenza (talvolta reale, talvolta fittizia) con il fratello Clemens Brentano, Goethe, la madre di Goethe e l'amica Karoline von Günderrode. L'edizione di queste lettere creò scalpore: molti criticarono la sua scelta di rendere disponibili le pagine scambiate con il fratello,<sup>1</sup> ma ancor più scandalo provocò la pubblicazione dell'Epistolario di Goethe con una bambina (Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde) nel 1835 (tre anni dopo la morte del poeta e filosofo), epistolario basato sullo scambio reale di lettere tra Bettina e Goethe.<sup>2</sup> In questo libro, infatti, fa capolino l'allusione ad un rapporto affettivo poco consona tra una giovane fanciulla e un uomo dell'età e soprattutto della caratura intellettuale di Goethe.<sup>3</sup>*

*Dalle pagine delle opere pubblicate da von Arnim emerge però una figura non certo desiderosa di far parlare di sé per qualche scandalo, bensì una donna diretta con decisione verso la propria autonomia intellettuale: “essere me stessa, questo sarebbe il successo della mia vita, non voglio nessun altro bene terreno”.<sup>4</sup>*

*Von Arnim è una donna dotata di una vivace capacità intellettuale, il cui desiderio di comprendere i misteri della natura, dell'uomo e dell'arte sono accompagnati dall'insoddisfazione verso la collezione di testi, materie e discipline che costituivano la base per l'educazione di una giovane donna del suo tempo. Nelle lettere contenute in Goethes Briefwechsel, come quella che qui pubblichiamo, o in La ghirlanda primaverile di Clemens Brentano (Clemens Brentanos Frühlingskranz), spesso l'interlocutrice dei due grandi uomini di cultura si riferisce ad una propria inferiorità intellettuale, assegnando a sé stessa, in quanto donna, il regno*

dell'affettività e delle emozioni piuttosto che quello dell'astrazione. Allo stesso tempo, però, fin da giovane riconosce l'importanza del pensiero e dell'intelletto quali strumenti per entrare in dialogo con la natura: "Il pensiero anima, tutti gli esseri si colorano alla luce del pensiero. ... Se così non fosse ... la creazione sprofonderebbe silenziosamente in se stessa".<sup>5</sup> Coerentemente, lungo tutto l'arco della propria vita dona particolare importanza all'educazione,<sup>6</sup> quale strada da intraprendere per esaudire il diritto di ognuno di diventare se stessi, di scoprire la propria libertà e completare ciò che una voce interiore affida ad ogni essere umano come compito.<sup>7</sup>

La consapevolezza di Bettina nelle proprie facoltà cresce nel corso degli anni: da un timido rifiuto dei consigli di lettura adatti ad una ragazza<sup>8</sup> proposti dal fratello Clemens, alle dispute con Goethe riguardo la superiorità della musica (in particolare della musica di Beethoven) rispetto alle altre arti,<sup>9</sup> fino al netto rifiuto del presupposto per cui la razionalità sarebbe prerogativa solo maschile.<sup>10</sup>

Un percorso di emancipazione, quello di von Arnim, scandito anche da una crescente consapevolezza politica. Fin da giovane, grazie soprattutto alla nonna Sophie La Roche, si interessa ai moti rivoluzionari francesi, e Napoleone suscita in lei la speranza di una rinascita dell'Europa nel segno della libertà e dell'autodeterminazione dei popoli. Speranza presto tradita: la sistematica e cruenta repressione dei moti indipendentisti in Tirolo la colpiscono duramente e in più occasioni Bettina manifesta un deciso sostegno verso la loro causa contro alla dialettica diplomatica che li abbandona e che sembra non curarsi minimamente della violenza con cui tali movimenti vengono domati.

La sua passione politica è fomentata anche dalla discriminazione che Bettina vede perpetrata nei confronti degli ebrei in Germania. Favorevole ad un'uguaglianza tra gli esseri umani indipendentemente dalla loro comunità d'appartenenza o dalla religione, si impegna a più riprese a far conoscere la cultura ebraica presso i suoi interlocutori cristiani. Nelle lettere indirizzate a lei, Goethe le chiede sovente informazioni sulla comunità ebraica che si trovava nei pressi della casa di Bettina, e lei rivendica con orgoglio il proprio contributo nella mediazione tra mondo ebraico e mondo cristiano.<sup>11</sup>

La curiosità verso gli stili di vita altrui, la necessità di una riflessione filosofica immersa nel proprio tempo e di una prospettiva critica che indaghi la materialità dei rapporti umani danno una decisa direzione politico-filosofica all'opera di von Arnim. Qui, il suo pensiero prende due direzioni: da un lato le indagini sulle condizioni di vita dei poveri che vivono ai margini di Berlino,<sup>12</sup> dall'altro il progetto (condiviso con l'amica Varnhagen) di influenzare ed educare i politici del proprio tempo.

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*Pubblichiamo qui di seguito la traduzione in italiano di un breve testo di Bettina Brentano-von Arnim: una lettera presa dall'epistolario con Goethe pubblicato da Bettina nel 1835 sotto il titolo Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde. In questo breve testo, la filosofia riassume brevemente la sua concezione dell'arte e del rapporto tra essa, la natura e il divino.*

Bettine Brentano-von Arnim, *Goethe's Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* (1835), in *Werke und Briefe in 4 Bänden*, Bd. II, hrsg. von Walter Schmitz, Sybille von Steinsdorff, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, Frankfurt a. M., 1992, p. 404-410.

An Goethe.

Also ist mein lieber Freund allein! – das freut mich, daß Du allein bist, denke meiner! – lege die Hand an die Stirne und denke meiner, daß ich auch allein bin. In beiliegenden Blättern der Beweis, daß meine Einsamkeit mit Dir erfüllt ist, ja wie sollte ich anders zu solchen Anschauungen kommen als indem ich mich in Deine Gegenwart denke.

Ich habe eine kalte Nacht verwacht um meinen Gedanken nachzugehen, weil Du so freundlich alles zu wissen verlangst, ich hab doch nicht alles aufschreiben können weil diese Gedanken zu flüchtig sind. Ach ja Goethe, wenn ich alles aufschreiben wollte wie wunderbar würde das sein. Nimm vorlieb, ergänze Dir alles in meinem Sinn, in dem Du ja doch zu Hause bist. Du und kein anderer hat mich [405] je gemahnt Dir meine Seele mitzuteilen, und ich möchte Dir nichts vorenthalten, *darum* möcht ich aus mir heraus an's Licht treten, weil Du allein mich erleuchtest.

Beiliegende Blätter geschrieben in der Montag Nacht.

Über Kunst. Ich hab sie nicht studiert, weiß nichts von ihrer Entstehung, ihrer Geschichte, ihrem Standpunkt. Wie sie einwirkt, wie die Menschen sie verstehen, das scheint mir unecht.

Die Kunst ist Heiligung der sinnlichen Natur, hiermit sag' ich alles was ich von ihr weiß. Was geliebt wird das soll der Liebe dienen, der Geist ist das geliebte Kind Gottes, Gott erwählt ihn zum Dienst der sinnlichen Natur, das ist die Kunst. Offenbarung des Geistes in den Sinnen ist die Kunst. Was Du fühlst das wird Gedanke und was Du denkst, was Du zu erdenken strebst das wird sinnliches Gefühl. Was die Menschen in der Kunst zusammen tragen, was sie hervorbringen, wie sie sich durcharbeiten, was sie zu viel oder zu wenig tun, das möchte manchen Widerspruch erdulden, aber immer ist es ein Buchstabieren des göttlichen *Es werde*.

Was kann uns ergreifen an der Darstellung einer Gestalt die sich nicht regt, die den Moment ihrer geistigen Tendenz nicht zu entwickeln vermag? – Was kann uns durchdringen in einer gemalten Luftschicht, in welcher die Ahnung des steigenden Lichts nie erfüllt wird? – was bewegt uns zu heimatlichem Sehnen in der gemalten Hütte sogar? was zu dem

A Goethe.

Allora il mio caro amico è solo! – Pensa, mio caro, sono contenta che tu sia solo! – metti la mano sulla fronte e pensa che anch’io sono sola. Nei fogli inclusi in questa lettera la prova che la mia solitudine è piena di Te, sì, in quale altro modo dovrei giungere a tali intuizioni se non pensando a me stessa in Tua presenza?

Ho trascorso la scorsa e fredda notte ad inseguire i miei pensieri, perché Tu mi chiedi di farti sapere ogni cosa, ma non potevo trascrivere tutto perché questi pensieri sono troppo fugaci. Ah, Goethe, come sarebbe bizzarro, se volessi annotare tutto. Accontentati, e completa tutto assecondando il mio senso, in cui dopotutto sei a casa Tua. Tu, e nessun altro, mi hai esortato a condividere la mia anima con Te, e non voglio nasconderti nulla, *per questo* voglio uscire allo scoperto, perché solo Tu mi illumini.

*Fogli scritti nella notte del lunedì e inclusi nella lettera:*

A proposito di arte. Non l’ho studiata, non so nulla della sua genesi, della sua storia, della sua prospettiva. Il modo in cui ha effetti, il modo in cui gli esseri umani la comprendono, mi sembra finto.

L’arte è la santificazione della natura sensuale, con ciò dico tutto quello che so di lei. Ciò che è amato dovrebbe servire l’amore, lo spirito è il figlio amato di Dio, Dio lo sceglie per servire la natura sensuale: questo è l’arte. L’arte è la rivelazione dello spirito nei sensi. Ciò che senti diventa pensiero e ciò che pensi, ciò che ti sforzi di ideare diventa percezione sensuale. Alcuni vorrebbero criticare ciò che gli esseri umani riuniscono nell’arte, ciò che creano, il modo in cui lo forgianno, ciò che fanno di troppo o di troppo poco, ma ciò non è che un’ortografia del “*fiat*” divino.

Cos’è che riesce a toccarci nella rappresentazione di una figura che non si muove e che non può sviluppare il momento della sua tendenza spirituale? – Cos’è che può commuoverci in uno strato d’aria dipinto, dove il presagio del sorgere della luce non si realizza mai? – Che cosa ci spinge a desiderare di tornare a casa nella capanna dipinta? Che cosa ci porta alla consueta inclinazione verso l’animale simulato? – se non una conferma dello spirito germogliante della creazione!

vertraulichen Hinneigen zum nachgeahmten Tiere? – wenn es nicht eine Sanktion des keimenden Geistes der Erzeugung ist!

Ach was fragst Du nach der Kunst, ich kann Dir nichts genügendes sagen? frage nach der Liebe, die ist meine Kunst, in ihr soll ich darstellen, in ihr soll ich mich fassen und heiligen.

Ich fürchte mich vor Dir, ich fürchte mich vor dem Geist den Du in mir aufstehen heißest, weil ich ihn nicht aussprechen kann. Du sagst in Deinem Brief der ganze Mensch müsse aus sich heraustreten an's Licht; nie hat dies einfache [406] untrügliche Gebot mir früher eingeleuchtet, jetzt aber wo Deine Weisheit mich an's Licht fordert, was hab' ich da aufzuweisen als nur Verschuldungen gegen diesen inneren Menschen; siehe da! er war mißhandelt und unterdrückt. – Ist aber dieses Hervortreten des inneren Menschen an's Licht nicht die Kunst? – Dieser innere Mensch der ans Licht begehrt, daß ihm Gottes Finger die Zunge löse, das Gehör entbinde, alle Sinne wecke, daß er empfangen und ausgeben! – Und ist hier die Liebe nicht allein Meisterin und wir ihre Schüler in jedem Werke das wir durch ihre Inspiration vollbringen.

Kunstwerke sind zwar allein das was wir Kunst nennen, durch was wir die Kunst zu erkennen und zu genießen glauben. Aber so weit die Erzeugung Gottes in Herz und Geist, erhaben ist über die Begriffe und Mitteilungen die wir uns von ihm machen, über die Gesetze die von ihm unter uns im zeitlichen Leben gelten sollen, eben so erhaben ist die Kunst über das was die Menschen unter sich von ihr geltend machen. Wer sie zu verstehen wähnt der wird nicht mehr leisten, als was der Verstand beherrscht. Wessen Sinne aber ihrem Geist unterworfen sind, der hat die Offenbarung.

Alles Erzeugnis der Kunst ist Symbol der Offenbarung, und da hat oft der auffassende Geist mehr Teil an der Offenbarung als der erzeugende. – Die Kunst ist Zeugnis daß die Sprache einer höheren Welt deutlich in der unsern vernommen wird, und wenn wir sie auslegen zu wollen uns nicht vermessen, so wird sie selbst die Vorbereitung jenes höheren Geistesleben in uns bewirken von dem sie die Sprache ist. Es ist nicht nötig daß wir sie verstehen aber daß wir an sie glauben. Der Glaube ist der Same durch den ihr Geist in uns aufgeht so wie durch ihn alle Weisheit aufgeht, da er der *Same* ist einer unsterblichen Welt. Da das höchste Wunder wahr ist so muß wohl alles was dazwischen liegt eine Annäherung zur Wahrheit sein, und nur der richtende Menscheng Geist führt in die Irre. Was kann und darf uns billiger Weise noch wundern als unsre eigne Kleinheit. – [407] Alles ist Vater und Sohn und heiliger Geist, der irdischen Weisheit Grenze sind die Sternebeschiedenen Menschlein, die von ihrem Lichte fabeln. – Die

Oh, cosa chiedi dell'arte, potrò mai dirTi qualcosa di soddisfacente? Chiedi dell'amore, questa è la mia arte, in essa dovrei creare una rappresentazione, in essa dovrei afferrare e santificare me stessa.

Ho paura di Te, ho paura dello spirito che chiedi di risvegliare in me, perché non riesco ad esprimerlo. Nella Tua lettera dici che tutto l'essere umano deve uscire da se stesso verso luce; mai prima d'ora mi è stato chiaro questo semplice e fermo comandamento, ma ora che la Tua saggezza mi sfida alla luce, che cosa ho da mostrare in cambio se non so-lo mancanze nei confronti di questo essere umano interiore; ecco! Egli era maltrattato e oppresso. – Ma non è forse l'arte stessa, questo fuoriuscire alla luce dell'uomo interiore? – Quest'uomo interiore che desidera venire alla luce, che il dito di Dio possa sciogliere la sua lingua, che il suo udito possa essere liberato, che tutti i sensi possano essere risvegliati, che possa accogliere e dare a sua volta! – E qui l'amore non è forse l'unico maestro? E noi non siamo forse solo suoi allievi, in ogni opera che realizziamo attraverso la sua ispirazione?

Soltanto le opere d'arte sono infatti ciò che chiamiamo arte, ciò attraverso cui crediamo di poter riconoscere l'arte e di goderne. Ma così come la creazione di Dio nel cuore e nella mente è al di sopra dei concetti e dei messaggi che noi ci facciamo di lui, al di sopra delle leggi che egli vuole applicare a noi nella vita temporale, così l'arte è al di sopra di ciò che gli uomini fanno valere tra di loro. Chi pensa di capirla non farà più di quello che può fare la mente. Ma colui i cui sensi sono soggetti allo spirito dell'arte, ha la rivelazione.

Ogni prodotto dell'arte è un simbolo della rivelazione, e qui spesso lo spirito sensibile gioca un ruolo maggiore dello spirito generatore. – L'arte è testimonianza che nel nostro mondo si percepisce chiaramente la lingua di un mondo superiore, e se non abbiamo l'ardire di volerla interpretare, essa stessa favorirà in noi la preparazione a quella vita spirituale superiore di cui essa è il linguaggio. Non è necessario che noi la comprendiamo, bensì è necessario che crediamo in lei. La fede è il seme attraverso il quale il suo spirito viene assorbito in noi, attraverso cui viene assorbita tutta la saggezza, perché esso è il *germe* di un mondo immortale. Poiché il supremo miracolo è vero, così nel frattempo abbiamo solo un avvicinamento alla verità e solo lo spirito umano giudicante porta all'errore. Cos'altro può e riesce a sorprenderci più semplicemente delle nostre piccolezze.

Tutto è Padre e Figlio e Spirito Santo, i limiti della saggezza terrena sono le piccole creature stellate che raccontano storie sulla loro luce. – Il calore del Tuo sangue è saggezza, perché solo l'amore dà la vita. Il calore del Tuo Spirito è saggezza, perché solo l'amore anima lo spirito; riscalda il

Wärme Deines Blutes ist Weisheit, denn die Liebe gibt das Leben allein. Die Wärme Deines Geistes ist Weisheit, denn die Liebe belebt den Geist allein; wärm' mein Herz durch Deinen Geist den Du mir einhauchst, so hab ich den Geist Gottes; der nur allein vermags.

Diese kalte Nacht hab ich zugebracht am Schreibtisch um das Evangelium juventutis weiter zu führen und hab viel gedacht was ich nicht sagen kann.

Die Vorratskammer der Erfahrung hat Vorteile aufgespeichert, diese benützen zu können nach Bedürfnis ist Meisterschaft, sie auf den Schüler über zu tragen ist Belehrung; hat der Schüler alles erfaßt und versteht er es anzuwenden so wird er losgesprochen; dies ist die Schule durch welche die Kunst sich fortpflanzt. Ein so Losgesprochener ist Einer dem alle Irrwege zwar offen stehn aber nicht der rechte. Aus der langgewohnten Herberge in die die Lehre der Erfahrung ihn eingepfergt hatte, entlassen, ist die Wüste des Irrtums seine Welt, aus der er nicht heraus zu treten vermag, jeder Weg den er ergreift ist ein einseitiger Pfad des Irrtums, des göttlichen Geistes bar, durch Vorurteile verleitet, sucht er seine Kunstgriffe in Anwendung zu bringen, hat er sie alle an seinem Gegenstand durchgesetzt, so hat er ein Kunstwerk hervorgebracht. Mehr hat noch nie das Bestreben eines durch die Kunstschule gebildeten Künstlers erworben. Wer je zu etwas gekommen ist in der Kunst, der hat seiner Kunstgriffe vergessen, dessen Fracht von Erfahrungen hat Schiffbruch gelitten und die Verzweiflung hat ihn am rechten Ufer landen lassen. Was aus solcher gewaltsamen Epoche hervorgeht, ist zwar oft ergreifend aber nicht überzeugend, weil der Maßstab des Urteils und des Begriffs immer nur jene Erfahrungen und Kunstgriffe sind die nicht passen, wo das Erzeugnis nicht durch sie vermittelt ist; dann auch: weil das Vorurteil der errungenen Meisterschaft, nicht zuläßt daß etwas sei was nicht in ihm [408] begriffen ist; und so die Ahnung einer höheren Welt ihm verschlossen bleibt. Die Erfindung dieser Meisterschaft wird gerechtfertigt durch den Grundsatz: Es ist nichts Neues, alles ist vor der Imagination erfunden. Ihre Erzeugnisse teilen sich in den Mißbrauch des Erfundenen, zu neuen Erfindungen, in das Scheinerfinden wo das Kunstwerk nicht den Gedanken in sich trägt, sondern seine Entbehrung durch die Kunstgriffe und Erfahrung der Kunstschule vermittelt sind, und in die Erzeugungen die so weit gehen als dem Gedanken durch Bildung erlaubt ist etwas zu fassen. Je klüger, je abwägender, je fehlerfreier, je sicherer: je wohl-verstandener von und für die Menge und dies nennen wir Kunstwerke.

Wenn wir eines Helden Standbild machen: Wir kennen seine Lebensverhältnisse wir verbinden diese mit der Genugtuung der Ehre auf

mio cuore attraverso il Tuo Spirito con cui Tu mi infondi, così ho lo Spirito di Dio, che solo Tu lasci in eredità.

Ho trascorso questa fredda notte alla mia scrivania per continuare l'*Evangelium Juventutis* e ho pensato a tante cose che non riesco a esprimere.

Nel bagaglio dell'esperienza sono stati accumulati alcuni frutti, saperli usare secondo le necessità è maestria, trasmetterli all'allievo è insegnamento; se l'allievo ha compreso tutto e sa come usarlo, sarà affrancato da ulteriore istruzione; questa è la scuola attraverso la quale si diffonde l'arte. A tale allievo sono aperte tutte le vie sbagliate, ma non quella giusta. Liberato dalla comoda dimora in cui l'insegnamento dell'esperienza lo aveva imprigionato, il deserto dell'errore è ora il suo mondo dal quale non è in grado di uscire; ogni strada intrapresa è un percorso a senso unico verso l'errore, privo di spirito divino, tentato dal pregiudizio, cerca di applicare i suoi stratagemmi, se li ha utilizzati tutti sul suo oggetto, ha prodotto un'opera d'arte. L'aspirazione di un artista educato dalla scuola d'arte non ha mai raggiunto niente di più. Chi ha mai ottenuto qualcosa nell'arte aveva dimenticato i suoi trucchi, il suo bagaglio di esperienza era naufragato e la disperazione lo aveva portato sulla giusta riva. Ciò che emerge da un'epoca così violenta è spesso commovente ma non convincente, perché il criterio del giudizio e del concetto è sempre costituito solo da quelle esperienze e da quei trucchi che non trovano corrispondenza nella creazione non mediata da essi; poi anche: perché il pregiudizio della maestria acquisita ha vinto, non permette che qualcosa gli sfugga e così l'idea di un mondo superiore gli rimane chiusa. L'invenzione di questa maestria è giustificata dal principio: "non c'è niente di nuovo, tutto è inventato prima dell'immaginazione". Le sue opere si dividono tra l'abuso dell'invenzione, verso nuove creazioni, tra l'innovazione illusoria in cui l'opera d'arte non porta il pensiero dentro di sé, ma la sua manchevolezza è mediata dall'artificio e dall'esperienza della scuola d'arte; e le creazioni che si spingono fino a dove il pensiero riesce, attraverso l'educazione, ad afferrare qualcosa. Questo è ciò che chiamiamo opera d'arte: quanto più è intelligente, consapevole, ineccepibile, certa, tanto più è compresa dalla folla.

Quando facciamo la statua di un eroe conosciamo le sue condizioni di vita, le combiniamo con la soddisfazione dell'onore in modo *colto*, ogni singola parte contiene un concetto armonico della sua individualità, il tutto corrisponde alla misura dell'esperienza nella bellezza e quindi siamo sufficientemente soddisfatti. – Ma questo non è il compito dell'opera d'arte svolto dal genio; la sua opera non è soddisfacente ma travolgente, non è la rappresentazione di una figura, ma la rivelazione nella figura del genio

eine *gebildete* Weise, ein jeder einzelne Teil enthält einen harmonischen Begriff seiner Individualität, das ganze entspricht dem Maße der Erfahrung im Schönen und so sind wir hinlänglich befriedigt. – Dies ist aber nicht die Aufgabe des Kunstwerks die durch das Genie gefördert wird; diese ist nicht befriedigend sondern überwältigend, sie ist nicht der Repräsentant einer Erscheinung sondern die Offenbarung des Genies selbst, in der Erscheinung. Ihr werdet nicht sagen: dies ist das Bild eines Mannes der ein Held war, sondern: dies ist die Offenbarung des Helden-tums das sich in diesem Kunstwerk verkörperte. Zu solcher Aufgabe gehört nicht Berechnung sondern Leidenschaft oder vielmehr Erleiden einer göttlichen Gewalt. Und welcher Künstler das Heldentum (ich nehme es als Repräsentant jeder Tugend, denn jede Tugend ist lediglich Sieg) so darstellt, daß es die Begeisterung die seine Erscheinung ist, mitteilt: der ist dieser Tugend nicht allein fähig sondern sie ist schon in ihm wiedergeboren. In der bildenden Kunst steht der Gegenstand fest wie der Glaube, der Geist des Menschen umwandelt ihn wie der Begriff; Erkenntnis im Glauben bildet das Kunstwerk welches erleuchtet. [409]

In der Musik ist die Erzeugung selbst ein Wandeln der göttlichen Erkenntnis die in den Menschen hereinleuchtet ohne Gegenstand, und der Mensch selbst ist die Empfängnis. – In allem ist ein Verein der Liebe, ein Ineinanderfügen geistiger Kräfte.

Jede Erregung wird Sprache, Aufforderung an den Geist; – er antwortet: und dies ist Erfindung. – Dies also ist die geheime Grundlage der Erfindung: das Vermögen des Geistes auf eine Frage zu antworten, die nicht einen bestimmten Gegenstand zur Aufgabe hat, sondern die viel-leicht bewußtlose Tendenz der Erzeugung ist.

Alle Regungen geistiger Ereignisse des Lebens nach außen, haben einen solchen tief verborgenen Grund; so wie der Lebensatem sich in die Brust senkt um auf's neue Atem zu schöpfen, so senkt sich der erzeugende Geist in die Seele um auf's neue in die höhere Region ewiger Schöpfungskraft aufzusteigen.

Die Seele atmet durch den Geist, der Geist atmet durch die Inspiration, und die ist das Atmen der Gottheit.

Das *Aufatmen* des göttlichen Geistes ist Schöpfen, Erzeugen; das Senken des göttlichen Atems ist Gebären und Ernähren des Geistes, – so erzeugt und gebärt und ernährt sich das Göttliche im Geist; so, durch den Geist in der Seele, so durch die Seele in dem Leib, der Leib ist die Kunst, – sie ist die sinnliche Natur in's Leben des Geistes erzeugt.

In der Künstlersprache heißt es: Es kann nichts neues erfunden werden, alles ist schon vorher da gewesen; ja! wir können auch nur im



stesso. Non direte: questa è l'immagine di un uomo che è stato un eroe, bensì: questa è la rivelazione dell'eroismo incarnato in quest'opera d'arte. A tale compito non appartiene il calcolo, ma la passione o piuttosto il patire una violenza divina. E chiunque sia l'artista che rappresenta così l'eroismo (lo prendo come rappresentazione di qualsiasi virtù, perché ogni virtù non è altro che una vittoria) in modo tale da comunicare l'entusiasmo che ne è la manifestazione: non solo egli è capace di questa virtù, ma questa è rinata in lui. Nella pittura l'oggetto è fisso come nella fede, lo spirito dell'uomo lo trasforma come nel concetto; la conoscenza nella fede forma l'opera d'arte che illumina.

Nella musica, la produzione stessa è una trasformazione della conoscenza divina che brilla nell'uomo senza un oggetto, e l'uomo stesso è il concepimento. – In tutto c'è un'unione d'amore, un intreccio di forze spirituali.

Ogni eccitazione diventa linguaggio, esortazione allo spirito; – egli risponde: e questa è invenzione. – Questa, dunque, è la base segreta della creazione: la capacità dello spirito di rispondere a una domanda che non è diretta ad un oggetto particolare, ma che è la tendenza forse inconsapevole della produzione.

Tutti i movimenti esteriori degli eventi spirituali della vita hanno una causa simile profondamente nascosta; come il soffio della vita affonda nel petto per attingere nuovo respiro, così lo spirito generatore affonda nuovamente nell'anima per ascendere alla regione più alta dell'eterno potere creativo.

L'anima respira attraverso lo spirito, lo spirito respira attraverso l'ispirazione, e questa è il respiro della divinità.

L' *espirazione* dello spirito divino è creazione, produzione; l'abbassamento del respiro divino è il parto e il nutrimento dello spirito, – così il divino produce e partorisce e si nutre nello spirito; così, attraverso lo spirito nell'anima, attraverso l'anima nel corpo. Il corpo è l'arte, – è la natura sensibile prodotta nella vita dello spirito.

Nel linguaggio degli artisti si suol dire: “Non si può creare nulla di nuovo, tutto è già qui da sempre”; sì! Si può inventare solo nell'uomo, non all'infuori di lui: perché all'esterno dell'uomo non c'è lo spirito, perché Dio stesso non ha altro rifugio che lo spirito dell'uomo. L'amore è il creatore. Poiché solo l'abbraccio dell'amore è il fondamento dell'esistenza, all'infuori di questo abbraccio non c'è esistenza, non c'è creazione. – *La creazione* è solo la presa di consapevolezza di come lo spirito dell'amore si dispiega nell'esistenza che lui stesso ha fondato.

Menschen erfinden, außer ihm gibt es nichts, denn da ist der Geist nicht, denn Gott selbst hat. keine andere Herberge als den Geist des Menschen. Der Erfinder ist die Liebe. Da nur das Umfassen der Liebe das Dasein gründet, so liegt außer diesem Umfaßten kein Dasein, kein Erfundenes. – *Das Erfinden* ist nur ein Gewahrwerden wie der Geist der Liebe in dem von ihr begründeten Dasein waltet.

Der Mensch kann nicht erfinden, sondern nur sich selbst empfinden, nur auffassen, erkennen was der Geist der Liebe [410] zu ihm spricht, wie er sich in ihm nährt, und ihn durch sich belehrt. – Außer diesem Gewahrwerden der göttlichen Liebe, in Sprache der Erkenntnis umsetzen: ist keine Erfindung.

Wie könnte der Geist nun erfinden wollen, da nur er das Erfundene ist, da die Entfaltung seines Lebens, nur die Entwicklung der Leidenschaft ist, die ihm einzuflößen der göttlichen Liebe Genuß und Nahrung ist, da sein Atem nur das Verzehren dieser Leidenschaft ist, und da seine Erzeugnisse nur das Verkörpern dieser Leidenschaft sind.

Also das Dasein ist das Umfassen der Liebe, das Geliebtsein. Das Erfinden, das Aussprechen ist das Einflößen ihrer Leidenschaft in den menschlichen Geist. Die Schönheit aber ist der Spiegel ihrer Seligkeit, die sie in der Befriedigung ihrer Leidenschaft hat. – Die Seligkeit der Liebe spiegelt sich in dem Geist den sie erzeugt den sie mit Leidenschaft durchdringt, daß er sie begehre; dieses Begehren zu befriedigen erzeugt ihren Genuß, dieses Mitgefühl ihres Genusses ihrer Seligkeit spricht der Geist durch Schönheit aus. Die Schönheit verkörpert sich durch den liebenden Geist, der die Form mit Leidenschaft durchdringt, so wie die Liebe die selbsterschaffene Form des Geistes durchdringt. Dann spricht nachher die sinnliche Form die Schönheit des Geistes aus, wie der von Leidenschaft erfüllte Geist die Schönheit der Liebe ausspricht. – Und so ist die Schönheit der irdischen Form der Spiegel der Seligkeit des liebenden Geistes, wie die Schönheit der Seele der Spiegel der Seligkeit der liebenden Gottheit ist.

Mein Freund glaubt vielleicht ich sei mondsüchtig, da wir heute Vollmond haben, ich glaub's auch.

L'uomo non può creare, può solo percepire sé stesso, può solo interpretare, conoscere ciò che lo Spirito dell'amore gli dice, come esso si nutre in lui, e come lo istruisce attraverso sé stesso. – Non c'è creazione al di là di questa consapevolezza dell'amore divino e della sua traduzione nel linguaggio della conoscenza.

Come potrebbe ora lo spirito voler creare, dato che solo lui è la cosa creata; dato che solo il dispiegamento della sua vita è lo sviluppo della passione, quella passione che infonde l'amore divino, che è per lui piacere e cibo; dato che soltanto il suo respiro è il consumo di questa passione; e dato che i suoi prodotti sono l'incarnazione di questa passione.

Quindi l'esistenza è l'abbraccio dell'amore, l'essere amati. La creazione e l'espressione sono l'instillazione della sua passione nello spirito umano. Ma la bellezza è lo specchio della sua beatitudine, di cui gode nella soddisfazione della sua passione. – La beatitudine dell'amore si riflette nello spirito che l'amore genera, che pervade con passione e che lo spirito desidera; la soddisfazione di questo desiderio genera il suo piacere, e attraverso la bellezza lo spirito esprime questa condivisione del suo piacere per la sua beatitudine. La bellezza è incarnata dallo spirito che ama, che permea la forma con la passione, così come l'amore permea la forma che lo spirito crea e dà a sé. In seguito la forma sensuale esprime la bellezza dello Spirito, così come lo Spirito pieno di passione esprime la bellezza dell'amore. – E la bellezza della forma terrena è lo specchio della beatitudine dello spirito amorevole, così come la bellezza dell'anima è lo specchio della beatitudine della Divinità amorevole.

Tu, amico mio, potresti pensare che io sia lunatica, visto che oggi c'è la Luna piena: lo credo anch'io.

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Bettina von Arnims Rechtsstreitigkeiten und ihr Nachlass*, in Antje Arnold, Walter Pape (hrsg.), *Romantik und Recht. Recht und Sprache, Rechtsfälle und Gerechtigkeit*, Berlin–Boston, De Gruyter, 2018, p. 111-120.

<sup>2</sup> Per una genealogia del volume e sul rapporto tra esso e il vero epistolario tra Bettina e Goethe si veda: Miriam Seidler, *Goethe's Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde. Seinem Denkmal* (1835), in Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *Bettina von Arnim. Handbuch*, Berlin–Boston, De Gruyter, 2019, p. 367-383.

<sup>3</sup> Ancora in tempi recenti, Milan Kundera nel suo romanzo *Gli Immortali* accusa Bettina von Arnim di aver utilizzato il prestigio di Goethe (e di altri suoi conoscenti e amici più celebri) e infangato la sua immagine allo scopo di acquisire notorietà tra i lettori tedeschi del suo tempo.

<sup>4</sup> Bettina von Arnim, *Clemens Brentano's Frühlingskranz*, in Bettina von Arnim, *Werke und Briefe in vier Bänden* [=AWB], vol. 1, a cura di Walter Schmitz e Sibylle von Steinsdorff, Frankfurt a. M., Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1986, p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> Von Arnim, *Frühlingskranz*, AWB 1, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Von Arnim, *Frühlingskranz*, AWB 1, p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> Von Arnim, *Frühlingskranz*, AWB 1, p. 212.

<sup>8</sup> Von Arnim, *Frühlingskranz*, AWB 1, p. 80.

<sup>9</sup> Segnalo le lettere presenti in queste pagine: Bettina von Arnim, *Goethe's Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde. Seinem Denkmal*, AWB 2, p. 123-125; 171-177; 184-191; 196-199. Di particolare interesse è la lettera indirizzata a Goethe con una disamina della musica di Beethoven: p. 344-355.

<sup>10</sup> Bettina von Arnim, *Dies Buch gehört dem König*, AWB 3, p. 181.

<sup>11</sup> «Ti invio tutto ciò che è stato pubblicato fino ad ora, tranne una rivista, che gli ebrei hanno intitolato *Sulamith*. È molto lunga; se lo desideri, posso inviartela, in quanto gli ebrei me ne hanno fatto omaggio, in quanto loro protettrice e aiutante», von Arnim, *Goethe's Briefwechsel*, AWB 2, p. 138-139.

<sup>12</sup> Si veda ad esempio l'opuscolo *Ehrfahrungen eines jungen Schweitzers im Vogtlande* pubblicato alla fine di *Dies Buch gehört dem König*, AWB 3, p. 329-368, oppure Bettina von Arnim, *Armenbuch. Materialien*, AWB 3, p.371-555.

**Miscellaneous**

**Varia**

**Miscellanea**

**Varia**



# Symphilosophie

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## The Very Idea of Innovation

### From Descartes to Post-Kantianism

*Karl Ameriks\**

#### ABSTRACT

Right at the outset of modern philosophy, Descartes surprisingly tried to blunt opposition to his new system by contending that it was not best described as an innovation. Nonetheless, the Scientific Revolution brought about an unparalleled shift in philosophy when the classical early moderns modeled their work largely on the systematic style of the new exact sciences. I discuss how and why the limitations in this approach led to another sea change in philosophical style, with the historically oriented innovations in philosophical writing advanced by the German Idealists and then the Early Romantics. The approaches of these movements are compared and contrasted with respect to how well they do justice to philosophy's genuine need, after the rise of modern science, to be presented in a distinctive and appropriately innovative manner.

*Keywords:* innovation, Scientific Revolution, Early Romantics, *Historical Turn*, Late Modernity

#### RÉSUMÉ

Dès l'orée de la philosophie moderne, Descartes a tenté de manière surprenante de désamorcer l'opposition à son nouveau système en prétendant que le terme innovation n'était pas le terme approprié pour le qualifier. Néanmoins, la révolution scientifique a entraîné un changement sans précédent en philosophie, le travail des penseurs de la modernité classique ayant été largement modelé à partir de là sur le style systématique des nouvelles sciences exactes. J'examine ici comment et pourquoi les insuffisances de cette approche ont conduit à un autre changement majeur du style philosophique, à travers les innovations historiques s'opérant dans l'écriture philosophique promue par les idéalistes puis les premiers romantiques allemands. L'article compare et expose les différences existant entre ces mouvements, eu égard à leur aptitude à rendre justice au réel besoin de la philosophie, après l'essor de la science moderne, d'être présentée de manière distinctive et adéquatement novatrice.

*Mots-clés :* innovation, révolution scientifique, premiers romantiques allemands, *Historical Turn*, modernité tardive

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\* McMahan-Hank Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, 100 Malloy Hall, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, IN 46556 USA – karl.p.ameriks.2@nd.edu

Snow's idea that engineers would solve the world's problems precisely by *not* reading Shakespeare, i.e., by devoting themselves single-mindedly to inventing industries to generate wealth, has since become so commonplace that we express it in a single word: 'innovation'.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Innovation as a Problem for Modern Philosophy

In his *Principia Philosophiae* (1644), Descartes went so far as to claim, "I have used no principles in this treatise which are not accepted by everyone; this philosophy is nothing new but is extremely old and very common."<sup>2</sup> Such a surprising statement naturally leads to the question of why Descartes, of all people, would feel a need to present his remarkably modern philosophy as if it is *not* fundamentally new and as if this is a *good* thing.

The first steps in an answer to this question can be found in some intriguing research by Daniel Garber, who has shown that, at the beginning of the early modern period, the word "innovator" was in general a term of *abuse*.<sup>3</sup> At that time it was still commonly assumed that it was bad to depart from long-standing philosophical positions, and hence it is not entirely surprising that even Descartes wanted to avoid being branded as a *novatore*, that is, a purveyor of what is merely new-fangled. Descartes even went so far as to claim that it was the Aristotelian-Scholastic systems that had "invented" divisive new claims, whereas his philosophy relies on "ancient" principles that provide the "common ground among all philosophers":

I shall add something that may seem paradoxical. Everything in peripatetic philosophy, regarded as a distinctive school that is different from others, is quite new, whereas everything in my philosophy is old. For as far as principles are concerned, I only accept those which in the past have always been common ground among all philosophers without exception, and which are therefore the most ancient of all. Moreover, the conclusions I go on to deduce are already contained and implicit in these principles, and I show this so clearly as to make it apparent that they too are very ancient, insofar as they are naturally implanted in the

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<sup>1</sup> Jessica Riskin, "Just Use Your Thinking Pump!," *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 67 (2020), 51.

<sup>2</sup> René Descartes, *Œuvres de Descartes*, eds. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Vrin, 1996), VIII A 323; henceforth: AT.

<sup>3</sup> All passages from Descartes are cited in Daniel Garber, "Descartes Among the *Novatores*," *Res Philosophica* 92 (2015): 1-19. See also Tad Schmaltz, "What is Ancient in French Cartesianism?," in *The Battle of the Gods and Giants Redux*, ed. Patricia Easton and Kurt Smith (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 23-43; and, for an overall perspective, see *Teaching New Histories of Philosophy*, ed. J. B. Schneewind (Princeton: Princeton Center for the Study of Human Values, 2004).



human mind. By contrast, the principles of the commonly accepted philosophy [in the “schools”] – at least at the time when they were invented by Aristotle and others – were quite new, and we should not suppose that they are any better now than they were then.<sup>4</sup>

Along this line, Descartes could also have argued that not only was Aristotle’s system an unfortunate innovation in its own day, but so too was the medieval adoption of Aristotelian doctrines, and hence it was no accident that they were regarded as radical enough to be temporarily condemned in 1277 by the authorities of that era (which in any case was hardly a seamless and unchanging unity). Moreover, by Descartes’ own time, the ever more influential perspective of the Reformation treated the doctrines of all other churches as infected by seriously misguided philosophical notions. The reformers (each in their own way) viewed Catholic doctrines as themselves corrupt departures, in this case from the ancient conceptual framework of the original Christian era. This claim naturally generates the question of whether even that era may have involved some debatable departures from earlier traditions,<sup>5</sup> and it makes understandable the strong interest, in the work of Herbert of Cherbury and others in Descartes’ time, in finding a philosophical framework that would be independent of the controversial doctrines of any local school or dogmatic theological tradition.

The fractured religious and political background of sixteenth and seventeenth century debates about the status of the new science helps explain the special intensity of the disputes between Descartes and his highly energized philosophical opponents. Descartes’ touchiness about being regarded as just another divisive radical is a giveaway that he sensed that major changes were coming and that, with the ascendancy of the new scientific understanding of the world, philosophy needed to prepare for momentous upheavals. As John Donne had realized, it was an era in which “new philosophy calls all into doubt.”<sup>6</sup> This chaotic situation also helps explain the peculiar fact that there were even attempts by some desperate

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<sup>4</sup> Descartes, letter to Dinet, AT VII 580; V 140.

<sup>5</sup> There is an old dispute about change here. For example, according to Ephraim Shedd, “Stephen thus considered himself a restorer of old, not a teacher of new truth.” “Stephen’s Defense before the Sanhedrin,” *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 13 (1899), 101. Cf. James Kugel, *The Great Shift: Encountering God in Biblical Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017); and Diarmaid MacCulloch, “The Vitality of Orthodoxy,” *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 67 (2020), 54: “[we need] to see through the common claim that Orthodox history represents a timeless, unchanging faith and practice. Actually, Orthodoxy has been remarkably good at innovation. In the eighth and ninth centuries [for example]...”

<sup>6</sup> John Donne, *An Anatomy of the World* (1611). See also Richard Popkin’s classic, *The History of Scepticism From Erasmus to Descartes* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1960).

thinkers, such as René le Bossu, to construct a combined Cartesian-Aristotelian system,<sup>7</sup> one that would provide a calming syncretic response to the perplexing worry that, after the scientific breakthroughs of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, a radically innovative philosophy was required. Despite these patchwork efforts, there can be no doubt that by the middle of the seventeenth century a new era had arisen with the irreversible establishment of the new physics. This was no mere technical advance but soon amounted to nothing less than the first-ever universal and well-grounded challenge not only to traditional religious philosophies but also to the age-old and naively teleological worldview of common sense in general.<sup>8</sup> It is not surprising that this development would give rise to nothing less than a fundamentally new kind of philosophy and a whole new world picture.

Rather than going further into the specifics of the seventeenth-century debate, my main concern will be with arguing that the intense worry about innovation in the era of the birth of modern science has several connections with important issues that are still relevant to appreciating *general* developments in philosophy and, in particular, to understanding the problem of *philosophical authority* and *progress* in our own time. The challenge to traditional philosophy brought about by modern science required a much better response than le Bossu's unpromising compromise. Moreover, it eventually became evident that there were fundamental shortcomings in the new aspects of the mainline work of even Descartes and his major modern successors. It took a while, however, to fully appreciate these shortcomings, and it can be argued that it was not until the end of the classical modern era, with the first post-Kantians in late 1780s Germany, that another *significantly new* model of philosophical writing developed, one that has taken on a variety of valuable forms to this day.

## 2. Innovation and History after Kant

There are a number of variations in the initial German response, and they need to be carefully distinguished in order to be properly evaluated with regard to the issue of how effectively they introduced a new form for philosophy that is innovative in a *fruitful* sense – one that continues to give it a significant role for the future, in the wake of the Scientific Revolution, and

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<sup>7</sup> Garber cites, among other works, René le Bossu, *Parallèle des Principes de la Physique d'Aristote et de celle de René Des Cartes* (Paris, 1674).

<sup>8</sup> Here I must ignore numerous rich complexities in Descartes' work. For a fuller picture, see Deborah J. Brown and Calvin G. Normore, *Descartes and the Ontology of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), and Durs Grünbein, *Descartes' Devil: Three Meditations*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Upper West Side Philosophers, 2010).

yet is not a crude program that dismisses even Shakespeare but instead has the virtue of finding appropriate ways to make use of past thought. The most distinctive general feature of the shift in philosophy carried out by the post-Kantians is the insistence on a new *form* of expression that I have labeled elsewhere as the *Historical Turn* in philosophy – a turn that was accompanied by the rise of a new general *attitude*, one that still dominates much of the best thought even beyond Germany and that I have labeled as *Late Modernity*.<sup>9</sup> This attitude characterizes an outlook that is still *modern*, since it *accepts* and even emphasizes the continuing significance of the Scientific Revolution – as well as the need for an expansion of the democratic political changes of the era. But it is also *late* in that it involves a new recognition of achievements of the past while beginning from a perception of the *limits* not only of much of premodernity (which focuses on allegedly evident and eternal doctrines) but also of the classical modern notion that philosophy needs to be modeled largely on exact science (which focuses basically on the technical achievements of the present).

In their distinctive *argumentative style*, the late modern exemplars of the Historical Turn stress a fundamentally historical mode of philosophical exposition, a *conceptual narrative* that contrasts significantly with the straightforward form of the quasi-scientific systems of the main classical modern philosophers in the century and a half from 1640 to 1790. In the golden age of genius from Descartes through Kant, major philosophers on the continent as well as in Britain (recall that even Hume aimed to be a “Newton” of the mind) presented their thought not merely in the form of an *ahistorical total system* but as one that – unlike Aristotle’s – aims at mimicking and even *grounding* the universal scope, rigorous style, and special certainty of modern physics. Notwithstanding Descartes’ denials and the differences between rationalist and empiricist approaches, it is clear that the leading philosophers in this period undertook in common what was at that time a truly innovative and extraordinary project. In what Heidegger called “the age of the world picture” – because it reconceived the whole world and our experience in terms of a philosophical vision of it as a technically systematic Cartesian grid – the classical modern systems led to the construction of an all-encompassing “scientific image” to replace not only the Scholastic

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<sup>9</sup> I take this era to extend from right after Kant’s time to our own day. See my *Kant and the Historical Turn: Philosophy as Critical Appropriation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), Part II; *Kant’s Elliptical Path* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), Part III; and *Kantian Subjects: Critical Philosophy and Late Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), Part II.

tradition but also the whole “manifest image” of the everyday lifeworld that had been dominant for centuries.<sup>10</sup>

In reaction to this philosophical revolution, the post-Kantians introduced the next major shift in method when, as late moderns, they turned away from what they took to be, by their time, a redundant and distorting fixation on mechanistic physics.<sup>11</sup> Almost all of them began their main work when they were together in Jena, the small university town near Weimar that the lectures of Karl Reinhold (a renegade former priest from Vienna) had made the center of the huge initial enthusiasm for Kant’s work – and that also, through Goethe’s support, eventually became a major force in sciences such as biology and optics.<sup>12</sup> The Jena writers soon divided into two related but quite different groups: the German Idealists and the Early Romantics.<sup>13</sup> The Idealists carried out their version of the Historical Turn by developing highly dynamic systems with either a *moral-practical* or an *organic-theoretical* emphasis. While the former orientation dominated the largely praxis-directed works of Reinhold and Fichte, and the latter distinguished the especially ambitious developmental metaphysics of the early Schelling (e.g., *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 1800) and Hegel (e.g., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1807), all four major Idealists felt it necessary to carry out a step-by-step reconstruction of the philosophical history of consciousness in general.

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<sup>10</sup> See Martin Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture,” *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 115–36; and Wilfrid Sellars, “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man,” in *Science, Perception, and Reality* (New York: Humanities Press, 1963), 35–78.

<sup>11</sup> Note the transitional terminology in one of the first documents of this change: Eckart Förster, “‘To Lend Wings to Physics Again’: ‘The Oldest System-Programme of German Idealism,’” *European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 3 (1995): 174–198.

<sup>12</sup> The immediate post-Kantian era was marked by revolutionary developments in sciences such as chemistry and biology, developments that Kant encountered only in their first phases. See *The Impact of Idealism. The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought*, vol. 1: *Philosophy and Natural Sciences*, ed. Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> There are many fine recent overviews of this movement. See e.g., *Brill’s Companion to German Romantic Philosophy*, ed. Elizabeth Millán Brusslan and Judith Norman (Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2018). My aim here is simply to give a sketch of how it can be seen as a *kind* of approach that offers a distinctive response to the question of why and how philosophy needs to be “innovative.” It is impossible in this context to reconstruct the details of the philosophy of the Early Romantics, let alone of related figures such as Schiller and Jacobi. The readings of Kant by these major figures have had – it can be argued – a long-term unfortunate effect, misleading most post-Kantians except for Hölderlin. Schiller’s miscue is the assumption that Kant held to a *necessary incompatibility* of inclination and moral reason, whereas Kant claimed only a *lack of necessary agreement*; and Jacobi’s error is to overlook the technical determinate meaning of “explanation” in Kant and to assume that, in transcendental idealism, things in themselves are introduced as inconsistent *explainers* of empirical determinations rather than as merely *indeterminate grounds*.

The four main Early Romantic philosophers – Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, Hölderlin, and Schleiermacher – quickly became disappointed with the new systematic obsessions of the Jena Idealists. They embarked on reconceiving philosophy in a different key by retaining an historical orientation but writing in the more fragmentary style of (1) “*progressive* (2) *universal* (3) *poetry*” – that is, in a manner that (1) is Enlightenment-oriented in ethics, (2) addresses all of humanity as such, including its common rationality, but is distinctive (3) in promoting change by also emphasizing aesthetically creative language and the importance of nonsystematizable features of human life.<sup>14</sup> The Romantic interest in the nonsystematizable takes many forms, but it is not a promotion of irrationality and usually is paired with a Kantian respect for our natural *regulative* interest in systematically utilizing the “Ideas of reason” (introduced in the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*) as far as is feasible. Like their similarly influential English Romantic contemporaries, the Early German Romantics were extraordinarily skilled creative writers, poets in a broad sense, and invented a new literary style with their highly imaginative stories, fables, and novels. In addition, in their more explicitly philosophical work, they were equally creative in choosing to write in the form of ironic and provocative aphorisms, fragments, and popular essays. A typical example is *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799), composed by Schleiermacher around the same time that he was studying Spinoza and deciding to embark, initially in collaboration with Friedrich Schlegel, on his game-changing translations of Plato (while also developing an appreciation of Aristotle, which went back to his oldest existing work, his notes of 1788, and eventually flowered in his *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics*, 1812-17). Besides being theologically innovative, this essay is directed toward a general modern audience and complements Schleiermacher’s prescient insights concerning the enlightening value of “free sociability” and new cosmopolitan forms of human relations (salons, reading societies, academic exchanges) that challenge the strictures of standard political and economic organizations and traditional restrictions on women.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The famous phrase “progressive universal poetry,” from Schlegel and Novalis’ *Athenaeum* (1798), #116, is treated in detail and connected with Hölderlin’s work in my “History, Succession, and German Romanticism,” in *The Relevance of Romanticism. Essays on German Romantic Philosophy*, ed. Dalia Nassar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 47-67.

<sup>15</sup> See Jeffrey Hoover, “Friedrich Schleiermacher’s ‘Toward a Theory of Sociable Conduct’: An Introduction and Translation,” *Neues Athenaeum/New Athenaeum*, vol. 4 (1994): 9-39; and Peter Foley, *Schleiermacher’s “Essay on a Theory of Sociable Behavior” (1799): A Contextual Study* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006).

However much they differed, both wings of post-Kantians stressed a *detailed* historical approach, one modeled on a key innovative feature of Reinhold's *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*. This work, which made Reinhold quickly famous throughout Germany, was originally a series of articles in a popular journal (1786-7) that became so widely known that most Jena writers borrowed heavily from its orientation without bothering to make explicit references. In place of Kant's own perplexing characterization of Critical philosophy in his quasi-Newtonian *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Present itself as a Science* (1783), Reinhold introduced a striking new standard: that the defence of any viable philosophy of the future must involve showing how it is, supposedly, the *only* proper course to take after a *sequential* evaluation of the *whole* pathway of major previous philosophies.<sup>16</sup> Partially under the influence of his history-obsessed Weimar pastor, Johann Gottfried Herder, Reinhold used this developmental model initially to defend the Critical philosophy as presented in the first edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). Instead of laying out the technical complexities of the *Critique*, Reinhold organized his presentation around showing how the general thrust of Kant's thought perfectly expressed the "spirit of the age" and pointed to a way to finally overcome one-sided divisions (broadly empiricist and anti-empiricist) in philosophy that went back to the Greeks and had become acute in the heated conflict between religious and anti-religious tendencies in the Enlightenment.

All the Jena philosophers followed the lead of this methodological innovation in Reinhold's work. The historical observations in the reconstructions offered by the Romantic writers are often more episodic in style than Reinhold's, but they are also much more imaginative, lapidary in form, diversity-oriented in content, and especially perceptive with regard to

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<sup>16</sup> For documentation of this point, see my *Kant and the Historical Turn*, ch. 8. Reinhold's historical approach represents only one aspect of his work. He often switched his tactics (though always with the aim of most efficiently promoting his Enlightenment-oriented goals), sometimes appealing to universally accepted facts of common sense or, at other times, presenting himself as a follower of Herder, or Kant, or Fichte, or Jacobi, or Bardili. Hence Samuel Beckett's perceptive line, in *First Love* (1946): "Yes, there are moments, particularly in the afternoon, when I go all syncretist, à la Reinhold." *Premier amour* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1970); English translation (London: Calder and Boyars, 1973), 26. The mention of "afternoon" already conveys the atmosphere of late modernity. An account of past philosophers can be found, of course, even in the work of figures such as Aristotle, but this is not the same thing as contending that a reconstruction of a full historical *pattern* should *henceforth* be a *primary* feature of philosophical argumentation.

humanity's place in nature.<sup>17</sup> In these ways they contrast with the narrowly progressive attitude of the German Idealists, especially in the works of Fichte and Hegel, which often dismiss non-Germanic and allegedly less advanced cultures. Despite their differences, each of these post-Kantians deserves part of the credit for the momentous shift in writing style that characterizes the broadly genealogical approach that came to dominate much of later philosophy. This approach, albeit carried out in a wide variety of forms, became the main common feature of the writings of a wide range of many of the most widely read philosophers of the future, from Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Foucault in Europe to Richard Rorty, Bernard Williams, Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, Robert Brandom, and many others outside Europe in our own time.

### 3. The Moderately Innovative Legacy of the Early Romantic Philosophers

As innovators, the Early Romantics were distinctive in a complex manner because when they imaginatively invented their new kind of genre-crossing philosophical style, they also shared the worry about *mere* innovation expressed even by figures such as Descartes. At the same time that the Romantics recognized that it was understandable that modern philosophy would try to retain a special status for itself by co-opting features of the widely-conquering authority of the unprecedentedly successful new physics, they also believed that any attempt at a *totally new* or overly future-oriented understanding of philosophy and knowledge in general was naive. Even today, the texts of the Early Romantic writers have a special appeal because of the way that they show how modern culture needs to look back to the past for authentically revitalizing rather than regressive or Whiggish purposes. The Romantics were motivated to initiate this kind of approach because of their common disenchantment with not only the overly ambitious philosophical claims accompanying the success of the new physics but also the work of their

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<sup>17</sup> See Jane Kneller, "Novalis, Nature, and the Absolute," in *Ontologies of Nature: Continental Perspectives and Environmental Reorientations*, ed. Gerard Kuperus and Marjolein Oele (Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 2017), 117-32. On the idea that some roots of this view of nature are already in Kant (as argued by Kneller), see Pierfrancesco Biasetti, "From Beauty to Love: A Kantian Way to Environmental Moral Theory?," in *Environmental Philosophy* 12 (2015): 139-160. On the intricate intertwining of nature and history in Hölderlin, see Camilla Flodin, "'The eloquence of something that has no language': Adorno on Hölderlin's Late Poetry," *Adorno Studies*, vol. 2 (2018), 1-25. With regard to diversity, Flodin (19, n. 101) notes that, as a vivid contrast to Idealist philosophies of unity and full reconciliation, Adorno repeatedly stressed a famous line from a late fragment by Hölderlin, *Sämliche Werke: Stuttgarter Hölderlin Ausgabe. Gedichte nach 1800*, ed. Friedrich Beißner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1953), vol. 2:1, 327: "Unterschiedenes ist gut." (Distinctions are good.)

Jena contemporaries, the quasi-Cartesian (that is, focused on what supposedly can be deduced from the mere notion of self-consciousness), extravagantly systematic, and all too narrowly optimistic German Idealists.

What distinguishes the Idealist movement, in contrast to the Romantics, is its tie to another of Reinhold's striking claims, his bold insistence – in the *Elementarphilosophie* (1789) that he developed in his first attempt at trying to surpass Kant as a systematic thinker – that a proper philosophical system must derive everything “from one principle,” the principle of consciousness.<sup>18</sup> Rather than mocking this extraordinary demand, Reinhold's immediate Idealist successors opted at first for trying to provide a *more fundamental* principle than the one offered by Reinhold. At the same time, this systematic wing of post-Kantianism combined its derivations from a first principle (e.g., the “I” or “being”) with the presentation of a *logically* developmental version of the Historical Turn, that is, one that claimed to be rational in the rigorous sense of *demonstrating* the *necessity* in Western philosophy of each stage of a *full* succession of dialectically improving epistemological and metaphysical positions. Here too they were following Reinhold, who had provided a relatively modest model for these efforts with his extended earlier argument, in the second half of his *Letters*, that the Critical philosophy (which for a while was re-baptized as “Kantian-Reinholdian”) was appealing precisely insofar as it could be reformulated as a synthesis of what was lacking in the extreme positions developed in recent as well as ancient philosophy.

The Idealists connected their historical agenda with a broadly monistic and quasi-Spinozist belief that something analogous to the seemingly complete physics of the Newtonian era could be reproduced and even improved upon in the a priori truths of their developmentally dynamic as well as metaphysically exhaustive system. They each proposed an all-inclusive holism that understood reality as “subject as well as substance,” that is, as critically dynamic in its underlying argumentative path toward having finally entered, in principle, into a dialectically complete stage of rational self-consciousness and self-satisfaction. This famous phrase from the Preface to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* could also have been endorsed by Fichte and

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<sup>18</sup> Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* is presented in *Gesammelte Schriften: Kommentierte Ausgabe, vol. 1: Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens*, ed. Martin Bondeli and Sylvan Imhof (Basel: Schwabe, 2013). Even at the time of the *Versuch*, however, Reinhold was more involved with historical and political matters (e.g., the anti-slavery movement) than generally recognized. See my “Reinhold, History, and the Foundation of Philosophy,” in *Karl Leonhard Reinhold and the Enlightenment*, ed. George di Giovanni (Berlin: Springer, 2010), 113-30; and *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy: Problems in the Appropriation of the Critical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), ch. 2.



Schelling,<sup>19</sup> although the subtext of Hegel's first major publication, the *Differenzschrift* (1801), was precisely to suggest that the systems of Fichte and Schelling, as well as of their predecessor Reinhold (whose name is also featured in the full title of the *Differenzschrift*), need to be understood as merely one-sided, although necessary, steps toward an encompassing Hegelian position. In proper dialectical-historical fashion, Schelling, in his *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (1833), eventually returned the favor to his one-time colleague by edging back toward the Romantics and reconceiving his own work as a more inclusive combination of a new "existential" "positive philosophy," featuring contingency and radical freedom, along with an old Hegelian "negative philosophy" of essences.

The Early Romantics rejected all the Jena versions of systematic philosophy, but insofar as *both* wings of post-Kantianism *insisted* on some kind of historical mode of presentation, it is worthwhile keeping in mind that they shared a *style* of argumentation that differs considerably from that of Kant and also the leading figures of the earlier, classical modern period.<sup>20</sup> The early moderns assumed that philosophy should proceed from first principles that are best laid out *directly* in a manner that parallels and undergirds the flourishing ahistorical sciences of mathematics, physics, and/or psychology (even though some had the skill to express their main points in dialogue form as well). Although Spinoza, Hume, Kant and others certainly had influential new perspectives on history, the presentation of their philosophical systems as such did not *emphasize* a need to invoke detailed argumentative treatments of a practically full *sequence* of the positions of their predecessors. With Reinhold and after, however, all the most interesting writers in the German

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<sup>19</sup> Schelling's development is especially complicated. See *Interpreting Schelling*, ed. Lara Ostaric (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), and Naomi Fisher, "Life, Lawfulness, and Contingency: Kant and Schelling on Organic Nature" (forthcoming). On the (often unappreciated) historical dimension of Fichte's early philosophy, see Ezequiel L. Posesorski, *Between Reinhold and Fichte: August Ludwig Hülsen's Contribution to the Emergence of German Idealism* (Karlsruhe: KIT Scientific Publishing, 2012). For a sketch of Novalis' compressed history of philosophy, see Laure Cahen-Maurel, "Novalis's Magical Idealism: A Threefold Philosophy of the Imagination, Love, and Medicine," *Symphilosophie*, vol. 1 (2019): 143-144.

<sup>20</sup> Some qualifications are in order for figures such as Gassendi. See Lynn S. Joy, "Humanism and the Problem of Traditions in Seventeenth-Century Natural Philosophy," in *Philosophical Imagination and Cultural Memory: Appropriating Historical Traditions*, ed. Patricia Cook (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 139-48; and Monte Johnson, "Was Gassendi an Epicurean?" *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, vol. 20 (2003): 339-359. Rousseau and Herder also wrote before 1790, but much of their impact on historical thinking in philosophy came later. Although some of Herder's writings preceded Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, he counts as a post-Kantian because his career began only after being one of Kant's first students.

tradition were innovative in explicitly stressing the need to construct a broad narrative of past systems for the purpose of showing in a successive manner how their own work was a compelling alternative to the main stages of prior philosophy, including orthodox Kantianism. There are understandable reasons why this shift occurred exactly where and when it did. The key catalyst for the Historical Turn right then was the *double crisis* of a bewildering plurality of *conflicting interpretations* (“misunderstandings” that needed to be explained) of Kant’s Critical philosophy, and a growing awareness that the exact sciences were now threatening to develop an independent and improper *monopoly* on intellectual authority. In the academy as well as society at large, modern science marched forward impressively without any appeal to the alleged but conflicting “foundations” offered in classical modern philosophy, let alone to the basic ideas that dominated earlier and more teleological and theological traditions.

From this point on, most philosophers faced two main options. A first and more systematic option was taken by those who chose to still attach themselves closely to something that at least tried to appear very much like the general *form* of “rigorous science.” This could be done either by attempting yet again, like the Idealists, to *ground* science in some kind of pure, although historically inflected, *Wissenschaftslehre* (Husserl, who as a student enjoyed Fichte’s work, worked out a late version of this project), or instead, in the positivist movement (which, after Comte, had a broad international following), by turning philosophy into a new kind of handmaiden, tasked with simply putting science’s independent achievements into a *perspicuous natural order* and thereby reducing philosophy to an after the fact *Wissenschaftstheorie*.

The second option that developed in the chaos of the immediate Kantian aftermath was taken by Romantics such as Novalis and Schlegel, who developed an orientation that still affirms the new exact sciences but stresses other irreducible capacities of philosophy and culture in general.<sup>21</sup> The Romantics turned away from the pretence that philosophy itself is a

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<sup>21</sup> See Theodore Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and its Institutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), and Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder: The Romantic Generation and the Discovery of the Beauty and Terror of Science* (London: Harper Press, 2010). On the “Romantic narrative” of nineteenth century science, see Tom McLeish, *Faith and Wisdom in Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 233. It is significant that the most scientific work of Novalis, who was well-trained in geology and mathematics, is called *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, to indicate its form as a collection of suggestive affinities rather than a tight deductive order. Schlegel’s early work was important in stimulating interest in Sanskrit and the early science of linguistics. See Michael N. Forster, *German Philosophy of Language: From Schlegel to Hegel and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24-27.

quasi-science or mere handmaiden. They had the talent to develop an appealing new form of historically conceptual philosophical writing by employing a flexible, ironic, and aesthetic style, one that best exploits the *general argumentative* capacities that give philosophical writing a unique role and authority. The Romantics' turn toward a less rigidly systematic approach, in appropriating what is best in philosophy's own long development, provided a stimulating new paradigm for numerous innovative writers in later generations – including the well-schooled Anglophone sequence of Coleridge, Emerson, and Cavell. It eventually inspired a whole series of philosophers to more effectively supplement and bridge, from a late modern perspective, the very different realms of art, ethics, religion, and science, and thereby to further Enlightenment goals in a way that is at once sophisticated and yet appropriately popular.

The importance of keeping in mind the distinctive advantages of different kinds of disciplines has been noted in recent discussions that helpfully distinguish the *general* methodologies and values of the sciences and the humanities in our era.<sup>22</sup> These discussions tend, however, to stay at a nonhistorical, “geographic” level and leave underthematized the historical issue of exactly how *philosophical progress* in particular – especially in our post-Scientific Revolution and post-Kantian era – compares and contrasts with the nature of development in exact science as well as art. In this context it is relevant to ask again how we are to make sense of the fact that even the greatest early modern talents in both science and philosophy, namely Descartes and Leibniz,<sup>23</sup> wanted to downplay the notion that philosophy itself should be understood as basically innovative. What was going on then, and what lessons does that have for later philosophy, especially in the context of post-Kantian thought?

My hypothesis is that Descartes and Leibniz had considerable preemptive foresight and were motivated in large part by suspicions that, no matter how impressive the new results of early modern physics were, the particular scientific advances that they generated would likely be vulnerable to further revolutions. Although Descartes could give the impression that he was committed to claiming that substantive principles of physics followed from his most basic *metaphysical* notions, in the end he admitted that the best argument for his particular system of *physical* principles was how well, in

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<sup>22</sup> See Richard Foley, *The Geography of Insight: The Sciences, The Humanities, How They Differ, Why They Matter* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> Leibniz's interest in connecting his mature philosophy and science with what he took to be genuinely valuable in the Scholastic tradition has been well documented by Daniel Garber and others.

comparison to other alternatives, it appeared to *explain* a wide range of phenomena.<sup>24</sup> It did not take very long, however, for new and even better explanations to arise in science. Even though Newton and others needed to pay considerable attention to Descartes' work, most of the Cartesian physical system was quickly known to be outdated. Nevertheless, precisely because Descartes emphasized a distinction between the levels of the a priori metaphysical principles in works such as his *Meditations*, and the ineliminable empirical content of modern physics and other sciences, much of his "first philosophy" could appear to remain safe from being disproven by a quick *reductio* argument. Although the Cartesian physical principles that led to falsehood were presented as in some way grounded in deeper metaphysical principles, the physical principles could be given up, after the development of better scientific explanations, by insisting that the more general metaphysical claims were not themselves at fault, and there was simply some mistake in what was thought to be dependent upon them. Similarly, Leibniz can be read as having a two-level system, such that particular empirical claims about bodies could be taken to be accurate and "real enough," but in a "lightweight" and possibly transient sense that is distinct from the most basic metaphysical principles of his system.<sup>25</sup>

This kind of separation between levels of argument can be used by defenders of rationalist philosophy *in general* – in the early moderns, Kant, and German Idealism – to contend that their metaphysical principles are not "mere innovations" in the manner of the concrete "here today – gone tomorrow" scientific hypotheses that, for example, Tycho Brahe had used in his new but still not elliptical model of the solar system, or that Descartes had advanced in his new but soon refuted thermal conception of the circulation of blood. Matters became quite problematic for philosophy itself, however, at the end of the classical modern period, when critics such as Hume and Kant offered arguments that convinced most philosophers that classical (i.e., early modern) rationalist *metaphysics* was also vulnerable to radical correction and was in many ways *even less* trustworthy than the principles of early modern science that had turned out to need to be quickly replaced. The status of philosophy and the issue of its methodology became even more of a problem when similar arguments were then advanced against Hume's phenomenalism and Kant's transcendentalism as well.

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<sup>24</sup> See the discussion of Descartes' scientific procedure in Bernard Williams, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978), ch. 9.

<sup>25</sup> I borrow these terms from a recent talk by Robert M. Adams, "Lightweight Empirical Realism and Heavyweight Metaphysical Agnosticism about the Physical."

Although metaphilosophical scepticism understandably became a serious threat in this period, the more remarkable fact is that metaphysics, and a priori approaches to philosophy's fundamental questions in general, still managed, at least for a while, to thrive even in the post-Kantian era. This is because the distinctive feature of the Historical Turn, as practiced at first by the major Jena thinkers, was not a form of relativistic historicism or history-blind system building. It was instead a broadly dialectical approach, with intricate arguments that systematic philosophy could vindicate itself by showing precisely how the understandable motivations and errors of previous thinkers could be *rationally* arranged and understood in terms of a philosophically reconstructible, self-correcting, and overall progressive process, one that constituted a sequence of improved conceptual frameworks that overcame the dilemmas of the past, one after the other. Insofar as earlier philosophical principles were found, in this manner, to be in need of correction in a generally convincing but (unlike natural science) non-empirical way – as happened, for example, with overly extensive rationalist appeals to analytic truth, or the atomistic empiricist reliance on the primacy of private representations – this development could be understood as a result of counterarguments that *vindicated*, rather than undermined, an underlying *general trust in philosophical reason*.

There are, however, significantly different ways to express this general trust. As long as post-Kantianism took the form of the ambitious Idealist systems of Reinhold, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel (which were themselves formulated in quite different ways at different times), reason was understood in terms of strict deductive patterns that, still in a way like logic and mathematics, involved strong claims of certainty, necessity, and in principle converging completeness. The Early Romantics, in contrast, were more interested in presenting sharp self-critical observations (e.g., Hölderlin's perceptive treatment, in *Hyperion*, of disillusioned sentimental indulgence and hasty patriotic fervor) and a variety of alternatives that respect neglected positions of the past without trying to force everything into one grand scheme. Furthermore, they were not only philosophers who saw the need to get beyond the Idealists' "imperialist" presumptions about what abstract reasoning could accomplish. They had, in addition, a widespread impact as extraordinary masters of language, literature, and popular creative writing. Like their highly innovative – but anti-Whiggish and not rigidly systematic – predecessors, Rousseau and Herder, they not only understood but also influenced history, and philosophical progress as well, in terms that recognized contingency, plurality, and speculative uncertainty with regard to alleged first principles and ultimate results.

This contrast, between ambitious Idealists and relatively modest Romantics, needs to be kept in mind in addressing the question of which form of post-Kantianism is best positioned to respond, after the common Historical Turn, to Descartes' statement that philosophy should, at least in some way, rely on "what has always been common ground" rather than "invented" notions. Despite their common Enlightenment belief that modern culture and philosophy were progressing in a significantly new way, *both* wings of post-Kantianism turn out, like Descartes, to present themselves also as, in a way, more closely tied than one would expect to "what has always been common ground." In part this characteristic derives from an orientation shared by Kant's Critical philosophy, because that philosophy too, despite its reputation for being revolutionary, was in fact constantly dependent on what our "healthy common understanding" (*gesunder Menschenverstand*) takes to be the *most basic* necessary features of experience constituting the human mind, namely, the elementary shared forms of space, time, language, and logic, as well as a universal *capacity* for appreciating broadly Rousseauian notions of morality, human dignity, and right.<sup>26</sup>

More generally, a common thought in modern philosophy, from Descartes to Kant and beyond, is the idea that, even after all the revolutions of modernity, one need not worry that humanity's *most fundamental presumptions* are *entirely* subject to dismissal. The view that a constant acceptance of these presumptions is important, and that significant knowledge need not be characterized simply in terms of a stress on "innovation," is still consistent with an appreciation of the need for considerable development and historical sophistication, as is evident even from late modern mathematics and physics (as well as recent debates concerning metaphysical principles). The Idealists could also agree with these points because, even in Hegelian dialectic, any "determinate negation" that arises must involve a conclusion that is necessarily dependent on a stock of prior implicit notions that provide essential material for the future, even as they are being revised under the constraint of some constantly valid dialectical norms. In other words, all the German philosophers stressed both continuity and change, and they did not go so far as to become radical

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<sup>26</sup> See my *Interpreting Kant's Critiques* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), Introduction. Admittedly, the "Rousseauian" presumptions in particular are not as *uncontroversial* (allegedly "self-evident") as was assumed by Kant and others, such as Richard Price and the authors of the Declaration of Independence. On some blindspots in (and fateful misuses of) Kant's work, see my "The Fate of Dignity: How Words Matter," in *Kant's Concept of Dignity, Kant-Studien Ergänzungshäfte* 209, ed. Yasushi Kato and Gerhard Schönrich (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 263-84.

pragmatists who would leave behind all fixed points, let alone philosophical nihilists who treat the human situation as thoroughly chaotic.<sup>27</sup>

The very notion of progress, in the Early Romantic idea that future writing should take the form of “progressive universal poetry,” also assumes a fundamental and necessary relation of partial *dependence* upon something that is already existent, namely, one's own main predecessors. As Kantian writers of “exemplary originality” (*Critique of the Power of Judgment* § 46), looking back at and swerving forward from previous exemplars, but neither burying nor slavishly imitating them, the Romantics were simultaneously history oriented and forward looking. They were innovators in the very intensity of their unearthing of, and building on, valuable notions found in our common but neglected or misunderstood cultural history. We owe to the Romantics a proper philosophical appreciation of the value, for a *truly enlightened* contemporary culture, of studying Eastern languages, the medievals, and early Greece, and in learning from otherness in general. Hölderlin (whose special significance was perceived by the young Nietzsche and Dilthey) and Schlegel's recovery of the unique features of “pre-Socratic” thought, for example, was an important rejuvenating insight well before Nietzsche's now lionized publications on tragedy and the “use and abuse” of history.

Furthermore, the Romantics also went beyond the limits of scientism by making the elliptical move of encouraging a return to an appreciation of prescientific dimensions of common life obscured by the revolutions of modernity. Hence Novalis' famous proposal that a proper function of “extraordinary” thought and “genius” is precisely to bring us back down, albeit in a significantly intensified form, to the “ordinary” – and thus also to raise us up to an appreciation in a new way of what is extraordinary within it. Along this line, one can add a more specific point made in similar language by Bernard Williams, namely, that a virtue of *historical* considerations in *philosophy* in particular lies in precisely how they frequently “make the familiar look strange, and conversely.”<sup>28</sup> Methodologically, this late modern focus on

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<sup>27</sup> See Christoph Haffter, “Grenzen der Reflexion: Pragmatismus, Idealismus und Frühromantik als Formen unendlicher Philosophie,” *Symphilosophie*, vol. 1 (2019): 75-104. Schlegel's interest in irony has been frequently misunderstood, especially in Hegelian circles, as tantamount to a total acceptance of arbitrariness. For crucial clarifications, see Fred Rush, *Irony and Idealism: Rereading Schlegel, Hegel, and Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> Bernard Williams, *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*, ed. A. W. Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 181, n. 2. Cf. Novalis, “romanticizing...[gives] the commonplace a higher meaning; the operation is precisely the opposite for the higher,

philosophy as a version of historical and conceptual “home-coming”<sup>29</sup> is itself an important innovation in *form*, and yet it is also a crucial feature of this view that much of its *content* is taken to have been already in existence, albeit in a manner that undergoes transformation in the process of renewed appreciation.

The decisive issue, in evaluating the advantages of Romanticism over Idealism, is just whether Romanticism’s kind of non-linear and partial appropriation of the past for future purposes has been philosophically more productive and less distorting than the strictly systematic claims of German Idealism. To begin with, it is essential that Early Romanticism not be inappropriately characterized (as, unfortunately, it often has been) as a surrender to arbitrariness or reactionary thought. Once that is clear, it surely appears that the test of time shows that in fact philosophy has by and large – in addition, of course, to many technical advances in formal areas – moved profitably toward an appreciation of a form of exposition that is more like the flexible model of the Romantics than the rigid structures of the Idealists (as well as of the positivists) and the age-old supposition that a major philosopher must present a system. A glance back at a list of the most influential writers of the last two centuries reveals that the more open and pluralistic “method” of the Romantics has understandably become one of the most forceful forms of philosophy in Late Modernity – and precisely because it can claim to be innovative in a highly creative and yet disciplined sense.

#### 4. Different Ways to Carry Out Innovation Now

An especially relevant issue to pursue in our contemporary context is how the way that philosophers after the Historical Turn may now see their own future compares with the way that scientists are beginning to recognize the limitations of the long-term significance of their work – especially after the

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unknown.” *Novalis Schriften*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965), vol. 2: 545, #105. Translation from Jane Kneller, “Introduction,” in Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, trans. and ed. Jane Kneller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xxxiii.

<sup>29</sup> Novalis, “philosophy is really homesickness...,” *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, trans. and ed. David W. Wood (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017), 155, #857. See also the discussion of Hölderlin’s poem *Heimkunft*, in Alexander J. B. Hampton, “Romantic Religion: Dissolution and Transcendence in the Poetics of Hölderlin,” *Symphilosophie*, vol. 1 (2019): 61-73. On Hölderlin’s line (in a draft of *Lebenslauf*), “...und kehre woher ich kam,” see Charles Larmore, “Die Freiheit verstehen, aufzubrechen wohin man will,” *Hegel-Studien*, vol. 47 (2014): 11-40; cf. Larmore, *Das Selbst in seinem Verhältnis zu sich und zu anderen* (Frankfurt: Klostermann Verlag, 2017). See also Rylie Johnson, “From Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* to Novalis’ Poetic Historicity,” *Symphilosophie*, vol. 1 (2019): 105-127.



influence of Thomas Kuhn and the growing emphasis on understanding science in terms of particular historical contexts. If one considers the content of leading-edge scientific theories, an honest look at the history of relatively recent radical changes should lead one to be quite cautious about supposing that, beyond meeting conditions of empirical adequacy, our current theories disclose anything looking like a unique ontology now, let alone one that is likely to hold up throughout all the changes of the future.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, there is the real possibility that, even if we were to have all sorts of good epistemic fortune in the future, we might never be able to claim a view of reality that is not missing a fundamental natural dimension. For example, given what we now know about how galaxies are traveling away from each other at ever greater speeds, one can easily imagine a situation in which there may be well-trained scientists who live in a galaxy so distant from all other ones that the rational conclusion of those scientists would be that there are not and never have been any other galaxies (and associated phenomena such as the “big bang”). This would be a huge error, but there is no ground for saying that we who are on earth now might not be subject to some kind of analogous, but impossible for us even to begin to describe, deep mistake – a mistake not just about spatial facts but about whole dimensions of theory that we could be blocked from ever developing. (This problem is to be distinguished from additional worries that can arise from recent speculations about a multiverse.)

Kant repeatedly expressed concern with this kind of problem, for it is a disturbing thought that if scientists like Newton had never existed, or if Kant himself had been born much earlier, he might have lived with all sorts of fundamentally wrong beliefs about nature that would have appeared to be in no need of correction.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Kant was concerned with the fact that he and others have been living in eras that, in a moral sense, are very far from anything like the achievement of the highest good, or even any strict proof of the real possibility of getting close to it. Hence, it can seem that, in a most important sense, the prime goals of human existence may be sought ultimately in vain, practically as well as theoretically. Kant’s response to this

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<sup>30</sup> See Anjan Chakravartty, *Scientific Ontology: Integrating Naturalized Metaphysics and Voluntarist Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). This book could be read as an unintended reductio of scientific realism. When scientific realism is understood as the view that ontology is determined by what “ultimate” science says, this can sound reassuring to naturalists. But problems arise once it is realized that we cannot expect there is only one way that the ontology of even “ultimate” science has to be interpreted.

<sup>31</sup> See Kant on Newton in e.g., *Metaphysik* L1 (28: 294), in *Immanuel Kant: Lectures on Metaphysics*, ed. and trans. Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 101.

double problem was to go beyond even Descartes and Leibniz's double-level view (which distinguishes basic principles of science from those of philosophy) and hold that the possibility of even severe limitations in natural science should not matter so much because, on his metaphysics, the best that theoretical cognition in general can reveal of nature is in any case merely phenomenal (that is, with ultimate grounds that we cannot determine), albeit in an objective and not private sense. This is not such a disturbing fact because, with respect to value and morals, Kant's ultimate position was the practical claim that, although we would be foolish to think that any individual human life, by its nature alone, ever reaches an adequate ethical state, it can still be maintained that at least a basically adequate conception of that state is all along familiar to us, insofar as we are not blind to moral duty.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, we can even rationally retain a rational hope that (given this conception and the help of some kind of ultimate fit with the world that exceeds what can be naturally expected) an adequate state of existence is at least within the reach of humanity as a species, and that our belonging, in the right way, to an early part of the human chain is after all enough to "justify" our existence (to use a Lutheran term found even in Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, although for aesthetic purposes, since he had – rather quickly, to say the least – given up on all pure notions of morality).<sup>33</sup>

In this way, despite the skepticism that the complicated worries that modern history, philosophy, and scientific progress can all engender, there is still a kind of historical solace that is available in the philosophical "faith" of

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<sup>32</sup> To simplify matters, I have been putting a stress here on the *contrast* between the Early Romantics and their predecessors, including Kant, but it is also true that, with respect to having a strong, but not speculatively established, progressive practical orientation, the Romantics are *very close* to Kant – and also to the emphasis, in Idealism, on concrete forms of mutual recognition. See my "Hölderlin's Kantian Path," in *Kantian Subjects*, ch. 12. Nonetheless, with all due respect for the popularity of the Kantian slogan of the "primacy of the practical," it must be conceded that he himself insisted that the only way to meet challenges to the claim that there is rational room for the employment of pure practical reason is to fall back, as a necessary condition, on the general transcendental idealist theoretical doctrine that the structures of the spatiotemporal world (and the concepts built upon them) do not give us metaphysically *ultimate knowledge*. Novalis and other Romantics were content with this restriction. Kant's theoretical philosophy also includes specific transcendental principles of experience, which in their detail and grounding go beyond common sense, and in this regard he is like the German Idealists in claiming to have established certain and *determinate* metaphysical *principles* (albeit "merely" for the realm of objects for our kind of experience).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Mark Johnston, *Surviving Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), and Samuel Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, ed. Niko Kolodny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Karsten Harries, at the end of his *Between Nihilism and Faith: A Commentary on Either/Or* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 170, cites Goethe's famous poem on mortality, *Grenzen der Menschheit* (1781), which concludes with the image of the human chain (*Kette*).

Kantian ethical subjects and their post-Kantian successors.<sup>34</sup> If they are fully serious and consistent, such subjects should concede that – contrary to the highly ambitious claims that distinguish the Idealist systems – it cannot be expected that, simply in their own life, they will obtain strict proof of a satisfaction of the fundamental aims of human existence. Nonetheless, they may defensibly believe that their orientation toward ideals of reason can be warranted after all because, at least in the long run, the rational struggle that they have been involved in may eventually take on something like a fundamentally adequate – that is, genuinely progressive and widespread – practical form.

There is a relatively indeterminate sense of consolation here – developed most fruitfully by the Early Romantics – that is unlike the attitude of orthodox theoretical Kantians, as well as of pre-Kantian rationalists and systematic post-Kantians. These groups still all believed that their work had overcome the problem of innovation – the worry about being merely innovative – by accomplishing the feat of having finally identified significant core metaphysical principles (with uplifting implications) that in fact would remain invulnerable to change, and that rest on truths so basic that, in their purest form, they might in principle, like mathematics, have been endorsed even in the early phases of our common humanity. This common ahistorical claim is compatible with the fact that the German Idealists at first were committed to justifying their metaphysics by giving an account of how it can be derived as the necessary culminating stage of the underlying logic of the whole sequence of major earlier positions in the history of philosophy. This strict narrative procedure of the Idealists is understandable, especially given Reinhold's influence on the style of the times, because it seemed the best way to make an immediate impact on the controversies of their age. This did not mean, however, that once their system was worked out (and as long as, unlike Schelling at times, they did not revert to early Romantic notions), they were committed to holding that philosophy would always have to employ this narrative style. The prime example of this transition is Hegel's abandonment of substantive reference to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* once he had worked out the final and exhaustive conceptual framework of the *Science of Logic* (1812) and the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1817). This residue of systematic conservatism has had its obvious costs though, and as even one of Hegel's ablest defenders, Robert Brandom, has argued, it made Hegel,

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<sup>34</sup> This is a kind of faith, *Vernunftglaube* in the sense of a trust that substantive reason will eventually bear fruit. For an important argument that commitment to morality *in general* requires a significant degree of "moral faith," see Robert M. Adams, "Moral Faith," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 92 (1995): 75-95.

despite his considerable emphasis on history, ultimately not attentive enough to the changes that can continue to arise even in the field of logic.<sup>35</sup>

The general moral-Kantian, Early Romantic, and contemporary scientific responses to the vicissitudes of history have had a different and much more open form, one attached to the idea that what matters most is not a particular set of constant metaphysical principles but just being part of an often contorted but enduring chain of self-correcting rational agents heading in a broadly appropriate direction (while maintaining, as noted before, numerous common informal presumptions). This is not to deny that, as early members of such a chain, even the best late modern philosophers must live with the expectation of likely turning out to be in large part forgotten by history, and to that extent looking like others in a long sequence of innovators who have become out of date. But this is just one way to look at matters. From another perspective, they can regard themselves as attached to something that is far from fleeting, namely, the human chain as an ongoing process, which includes the advances of its earlier stages and their likely rational effect, in some way, on its later fundamentally enriched states. There is no need to think in terms of needing to reach a final state, for presumably even if, in a process of “infinite approximation,” future Kantian moral agents, modern scientists, or Early Romantics, ever reach a condition close to basic satisfaction of the interests of reason, there still would remain for them an enormous variety of rewarding ways to refine and apply their insights. And so, even if they, like Descartes, were to say that on this point they would prefer, in a sense, not to be regarded as innovators, they still would have countless new tasks of detail worth pursuing.

There is also no need to deny that the corrective procedure of science in particular, at least as it was understood by 1800, has had the distinctive feature of having achieved – unlike metaphysics – innumerable impressive and precisely confirmed testable results (even though, as William Whewell argued, their discovery generally depends, like art and philosophy, on the breakthroughs of genius, the creative introduction of innovative “Ideas”). Metaphysics (like the “moral sciences” as well, of course), despite Kant’s own theoretical and Idealist goal of it finally becoming a genuine science, is nowhere close to being able to boast of similarly well tested and broadly accepted accomplishments, let alone the kind of uncontroversial progress

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<sup>35</sup> See Robert Brandom, “Sketch of a Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel,” *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus/International Yearbook of German Idealism*, vol. 3 (2015): 131-161. It is understandable that Brandom himself, like other interpreters such as Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard, advocates a more flexible form of Hegelianism – and a more charitable, but controversial, way of interpreting Hegel.

found in numerous a priori developments in mathematics and formal logic. As has already been noted, however, modern science itself is still nowhere near establishing a theoretical situation of complete convergence and closure. Contrary to the earlier expectations of the best minds, recent centuries have brought with them, even in physics, a plurality of radically new scientific frameworks (relativity, quantum mechanics, string theory) that have left us far short of any right to claim we are in confirmed possession of a single and exhaustive account of the ultimate features of the natural world.<sup>36</sup>

In this way, the perplexities of contemporary science turn out to bear some analogy to the situation of philosophy, Romantically reconceived, which is also characterized by a fundamental lack of convergence and closure – and yet, within each of a variety of approaches, there continue to be numerous advances in detail. In contemporary philosophy,<sup>37</sup> this is a progress in better defining old options, imaginatively constructing new variations of them (e.g., neo-Aristotelianism, neo-Spinozism, neo-Kantianism, neo-Hegelianism), and, in the wake of the Early Romantics, relentlessly refashioning a host of mind-opening new methodologies (including cultural studies and gender studies) that are especially relevant to enlightening the complexities of common life in our inescapable late modern situation. In addition to adding new twists to the continental movements of hermeneutics, phenomenology, Critical Theory, and neo-structuralism (and the detailed critiques developed by Manfred Frank), the pluralistic spirit of Romanticism lives on in a variety of important strands of recent Anglophone philosophy. Consider, for example, the Schleiermachian “patterns of moral complexity” traced by Charles Larmore, the ironic and quasi-Kierkegaardian neo-Freudianism practiced by Jonathan Lear, and the radical (broadly Marxist) and fragmented “real politics” promoted by Raymond Geuss.<sup>38</sup> All this amounts to real innovation after all, innovation that need not be taken to

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<sup>36</sup> See Lee Smolin, *The Trouble with Physics: The Rise of String Theory, The Fall of a Science, and What Comes Next* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006). In other words, and despite recent enormous horrors, Martin Luther King’s dream of crossing over into a practical “promised land” still looks more rational now than Einsteinian dreams of an all-inclusive “unified field theory.”

<sup>37</sup> For examples of piecemeal progress outside of the German tradition, see Gary Gutting, *What Philosophers Know: Case Studies in Recent Analytic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> See Charles Larmore, *The Romantic Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 53, and *Patterns of Moral Complexity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Jonathan Lear, *A Case for Irony* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); and Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

literally call “all into doubt” but is still more than enough to give philosophy a distinctive and creatively critical role.

### 5. Yet Another Concluding Unscientific Postscript

The piecemeal character of the writing of the Early Romantics is a feature that can also be found in many examples of contemporary analytic philosophy that – *unlike* the perceptive appropriation of earlier European writers by Larmore, Lear, and Geuss – seem to have nothing directly to do with developments in *German* philosophy. In this respect, the shift from German Idealism to Early Romanticism can be regarded as only a partial *analogue* to – and not a likely *cause* of – the epochal shift, in mainline twentieth-century Anglophone philosophy, from highly systematic programs, such as the early Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) and logical atomism, to something more like the fragmentary style of the late Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) and then countless variations on conceptual analysis.<sup>39</sup> The fairly typical approach of a leading contemporary analytic philosopher such as Harry Frankfurt – who in addition has had considerable success at the best-seller level – involves an admirably honest but quite “modestly systematic” attitude, one that does not explicitly feature an insistence on a historical (or quasi-scientific) form of presentation:

It is sometimes claimed that the analytic philosophy in which I was educated, and to whose ethos and canons of intellectual style I still endeavor more or less to adhere, possesses certain new and especially powerful tools and techniques, which allegedly enable it to achieve an invaluable penetration and rigor but which inevitably also distance it from the uninitiated. I have no idea what these remarkable tools and techniques are supposed to be, and I am pretty sure that I do not possess them.<sup>40</sup>

Although in fact Frankfurt is also a distinguished expert on the history of modern philosophy, well known for his radically innovative interpretation of Descartes, he has not gone so far as to also construct an extensive historical narrative, to intertwine with his main analytic claims, in the way that several other leading figures (in addition to those mentioned earlier), such as John Rawls, J. B. Schneewind, Stephen Darwall, and Terence Irwin have done. But Frankfurt’s influential argumentation concerning the concept of the will

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Alexander Stern, *The Fall of Language: Benjamin and Wittgenstein on Meaning* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

<sup>40</sup> Harry G. Frankfurt, *Necessity, Volition, and Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), x.

and its connections to various parts of our tradition from Genesis and after, up through several of the major moderns, still involves, like the Romantics, a trend-setting philosophical recovery operation on long misunderstood historical positions, albeit again in a more lapidary rather than exhaustive form.

Attitudes toward Descartes in particular have been one of the main bellwethers of major changes in philosophy's orientation. Ironically, his alleged influence eventually became more widely decried than that of the Scholastics in early modern philosophy, and by the middle of the twentieth-century he – or at least what was hastily assumed about his thought – had become the common whipping-post of both Anglophone and continental thought. But Frankfurt's work was a major catalyst in the remarkable reversal that occurred when top analytic philosophers began to turn their serious attention, without apology, toward Descartes and then other classic figures of the modern era.<sup>41</sup> It thus can even be said that an unexpected turn back to a renewed appreciation of the old has been one of the main new features of genuinely innovative philosophy in the last half-century.

More generally, a major lesson of recent research in fields such as the history of science, as well as (what is presumptuously labeled as) “political science,” is that any work involving a focus on the nature of language and/or the elucidation of important contested concepts – which is precisely what dominates most of contemporary philosophy – cannot help but benefit from the consideration that our understanding of concepts is developed in specific historical contexts. These contexts need not limit the concepts to a merely relative meaning but they can often be relevant to evaluating bold claims on substantive issues – for example, what does “religion” or “evil” or “autonomy” mean even for us, once we appreciate that there are cultures that do not seem to have the term? In sum, even if the Historical Turn has not been behind every important innovative work in recent philosophy, there is, fortunately, now much more of an acceptance of historical considerations and other aspects of the attitude of the Early Romantics than was the case in earlier periods in the last century of Anglophone philosophy.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See Harry G. Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers and Madmen: The Defense of Reason in Descartes's "Meditations"* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970). Reissued with a Foreword by Rebecca Goldstein (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). Also pathbreaking around then was the work of Bernard Williams and Edwin Curley on Descartes, as well as P.F. Strawson, Jonathan Bennett, and Wilfrid Sellars on Kant, and then Robert Fogelin on Hume, Robert Adams on Leibniz, Nicholas Wolterstorff on Locke, and so on.

<sup>42</sup> Special thanks on this project to Tad Schmaltz, Fred Rush, Noell Birondo, Aaron Wells, Robert Audi, Charles Larmore, and the editors.





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## Dialetheism as Romanticism and the Hegelian Critique of True Contradictions

*Stefan Schick\**

### ABSTRACT

Dialetheism is the view that some contradictions are not *per se* false but actually true. Therefore, dialetheists argue that the law of non-contradiction does not hold universally. It is a view held dearly by many dialetheists that Hegel was their modern ancestor. This paper argues that the question of the truth of contradictions is the essential point of departure between Hegel and dialetheism, and that Friedrich Schlegel and the early Romantics were the original precursors of dialetheism, anticipating many arguments that doubted the universal validity of the law of non-contradiction. Ultimately, the paper reads Hegel's critique of romantic irony as a critique of dialetheism.

*Keywords:* Friedrich Schlegel, Hegel, dialetheism, contradiction, irony

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Dialetheismus zeichnet sich durch die Überzeugung aus, dass einige Widersprüche nicht *per se* falsch, sondern tatsächlich wahr sind. Folglich argumentieren Dialetheisten, dass das Widerspruchsprinzip nicht universell gültig ist. Mehrere Dialetheisten sind dabei der Ansicht, Hegel wäre der neuzeitliche Gründervater der Behauptung wahrer Widersprüche. Dieser Artikel argumentiert, dass Hegel in der Frage nach der Wahrheit von Widersprüchen fundamental vom Dialetheismus abweicht. Vielmehr sind Friedrich Schlegel und die Frühromantiker die ursprünglichen Vorläufer des Dialetheismus, die bereits zentrale Argumente gegen die universelle Gültigkeit des Widerspruchsprinzips antizipieren. Abschließend interpretiert dieser Artikel Hegels Kritik an der romantischen Ironie als Kritik am Dialetheismus.

*Stichwörter:* Friedrich Schlegel, Hegel, Dialetheismus, Widerspruch, Ironie

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\* Prof. Dr., Institut für Philosophie, Universität Regensburg, 93040 Regensburg, Germany  
– stefan.schick@psk.uni-regensburg.de

Responding to the problems of mathematical, logical, and linguistic self-referential paradoxes (e.g. the liar paradox, Russell's paradox), dialetheism claims that some contradictions of the form "a & non-a" are irreducible, i.e. that they cannot be eliminated.<sup>1</sup> Dialetheism therefore is the view that some contradictions are not per se false but actually true. Thus, dialetheists argue that the law of non-contradiction (LNC) does not hold universally. According to dialetheism, we should rather accept the truth of these contradictions in our logical systems, languages, etc. than stay within the limits of orthodox logic at the price of metalinguistic hierarchies or the distinction between classes and sets.<sup>2</sup>

One of the most important representatives of dialetheism, the Australian philosopher Graham Priest, therefore maintains that "there is nothing wrong with believing some contradictions."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Priest claims that Hegel is one of the most significant proponents of this position, since he had challenged Aristotle's assertion in *Metaphysics IV* that a contradiction cannot be true.<sup>4</sup> And there is even more to Hegel which Priest finds congenial: more than any other Western philosopher, Hegel allegedly "understood the dialethic nature of the limits of thought"<sup>5</sup> and maintained that true contradictions are concerned with our conceptual limits of thought.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elena Ficara, "Dialectic and Dialetheism," *History and Philosophy of Logic* 34 (2013): 35–52, 37. In contrast to dialetheism, a non-dialetheist paraconsistent logic does not claim the truth of contradictions but only "allows the possibility of some contradictions, without triviality automatically following" (Zach Weber, "Atheism and Dialetheism; or 'Why I Am Not a (Paraconsistent) Christian'," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (2018): 1–7, 2; cf. Francesco Berto, "Is Dialetheism an Idealism?," *Dialectica* 61 (2007): 235–263, 235ff.). Paraconsistent logicians of the second type are agnostic about the question whether there are inconsistent objects in reality (Newton C.A. da Costa/Otávio Bueno/Analice Volkov, "Outline of a Paraconsistent Category Theory," *Alternative Logics. Do Sciences Need Them?* (Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer, 2004), ed. Paul Weingartner, 95–114, 109f. See too: Stefan Schick, *Contradictio Est Regula Veri. Die Grundsätze des Denkens in der formalen, transzendentalen und spekulativen Logik* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2010), 103–120.

<sup>2</sup> Graham Priest, "The Logic of Paradox," *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 8 (1979): 219–241, 220. For further reading see Graham Priest/J. C. Beall/Bradley Armour-Garb (eds.), *The Law of Non-Contradiction. New Philosophical Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Graham Priest, "What is So Bad about Contradictions?" *The Journal of Philosophy* 95 (1998): 410–426, 410; Priest, "The Logic of Paradox," 219; see too, Jan Lukasiewicz, *Über den Satz des Widerspruchs bei Aristoteles* (Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Olms, 1993), 1; 4.

<sup>4</sup> Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5. According to Aristotle, LNC ("It is impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not to belong to the same thing and in the same relation") is the most certain principle of all, "which the student of any form of Being must grasp" (*Metaphysics IV*, 3 1005b; tr. Hugh Tredennick). But already in Plato, one can find quite explicit formulations of LNC (*Politeia* 436b; *Sophistes* 263d; *Symposion* 187 a–b).

<sup>5</sup> Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

For each time we attempt to conceive of an infinite totality, our thinking generates contradictory objects which are both within and without the limits of these (necessarily self-referential) totalities, such as the set of all sets that are not members of themselves, which both contains itself and does not contain itself.<sup>7</sup> These totalities, as they are conceived by human thought, are both finite and infinite, i.e. dialetheic, and exactly therefore truly infinite: “The true infinite is the notion of an object whose finitude is its infinitude, and which is therefore both finite and infinite.”<sup>8</sup> Only by accepting this contradictory nature of infinity can we grasp its true concept, whereas the separation of finitude and infinity results in a flawed concept of infinity. And since our thinking necessarily tries to grasp these totalities, it is forced to exceed its own limits – despite the fact that it cannot transcend them.<sup>9</sup> This, according to Priest, was Hegel’s original insight.

In contrast to Priest’s interpretation, most of today’s advocates of Hegel’s dialectics rather deny its affirmation of bare contradictions of the form “a & non-a.” Otherwise, Hegel’s dialectics would lead to the collapse of rational thinking.<sup>10</sup> For according to the rule *ex contradictione quodlibet* (EFQ), a logical contradiction entails everything. Therefore, if one contradiction is true, every arbitrary proposition and also every contradiction is true.<sup>11</sup> Yet, dialetheists avoid this consequence by refuting the disjunctive syllogism:  $\neg(a \vee b) \Leftrightarrow \neg a \Rightarrow b$ .<sup>12</sup> And thus, since Priest does not have to accept EFQ, he can take Hegel’s claim of existing contradictions seriously without accepting the disastrous consequence of trivialism.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 3f.; Gregory Scott Moss, “Dialetheism and the Problem of the Missing Difference,” *SATS* 19 (2018): 1–22, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 108.

<sup>9</sup> Priest, “The Limits of Thought—and Beyond,” *Mind* 100 (1991): 361–370, 369.

<sup>10</sup> Vittorio Hösle, *Hegels System. Der Idealismus der Subjektivität und das Problem der Intersubjektivität* (Hamburg: Meiner, <sup>2</sup>1998), 157; Béatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 43. For further reading see Michael Wolff, *Der Begriff des Widerspruchs. Eine Studie zur Dialektik Kants und Hegels* (Berlin: Eule der Minerva, <sup>3</sup>2017); Schick, *Contradictio Est Regula Veri*, 279–474. For a deviating view, see Jens Halfwassen, *Hegel und der spätantike Neuplatonismus. Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik des Einen und des Nous in Hegels spekulativer und geschichtlicher Deutung* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1999) and Klaus Düsing, “Identität und Widerspruch. Untersuchungen zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Dialektik Hegels,” *Giornale di Metafisica, Nuova Ser.* 6 (1984), 315–358.

<sup>11</sup> Priest, “What is so Bad about Contradictions,” 410f.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Routley/V. Routley, “Negation and Contradiction,” *Revista Colombiana de Matemáticas* 19 (1985): 201–231, 212f.; Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 113ff.; Priest, “The Logic of Paradox,” 226–231.

<sup>13</sup> Ficara, “Dialectic and Dialetheism,” 35f.; Michela Bordignon, “Contradiction or Non-Contradiction? Hegel’s Dialectic between Brandom and Priest,” *Verifiche* 41 (2012): 221–

Priest's interpretation of Hegel is also relevant for the study of early Romanticism: For scholars such as Strohschneider-Kohrs and others hold that Hegel's dialectics is just the continuation of the early Romantics' discovery of the "antithetical structure of self-consciousness"<sup>14</sup> and their rejection of LNC.<sup>15</sup> Hegel himself allegedly ignored this "intimate spiritual affiliation"<sup>16</sup> between his dialectical logic and the Romantics' use of oppositions and their annihilation of classical logic, particularly, in Friedrich Schlegel's concept of irony.<sup>17</sup> Hegel's "denunciation"<sup>18</sup> of Schlegel's "absolute authority of the ironic I"<sup>19</sup> as an exaggeration of Fichte's subjective idealism ("the insubstantial subjectivity of irony")<sup>20</sup> unfairly downplayed the fact that Schlegel's irony is the "essential connecting link in the evolution from Kant to Hegel."<sup>21</sup> If this is true, it was early German Romanticism and not Hegel who first challenged the universal validity of LNC and "understood the dialethic nature of the limits of thought."<sup>22</sup>

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245, 245. For Hegel himself, EFQ was not really an issue. Whereas it was already formulated during the Middle Ages, the modern predecessors of Hegel such as Leibniz, Baumgarten, Ploucquet, and Kant, do not mention EFQ at all.

<sup>14</sup> Jochen Hörisch, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft. Der Universalitätsanspruch von Dichtung in der frühromantischen Poetologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), 58.

<sup>15</sup> Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs, *Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, <sup>2</sup>1977), 22; Lothar Pikulik, *Frühromantik. Epoche–Werke–Wirkung* (München: Beck, <sup>2</sup>2000), 93; Violetta L. Waibel, "'Wechselvernichtung' und 'freywilliges Entsagen des Absoluten'. Friedrich Schlegel und Friedrich von Hardenberg im Dialog," *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus* 6 (2009): 183–210, 202; Steven B. Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism. Rights in Context* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 200; Marcus Böhm, *Dialektik bei Friedrich Schlegel. Zwischen transzendentaler Erkenntnis und absolutem Wissen* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2020), 11; 73; 105.

<sup>16</sup> Ernst Behler, "Introduction," *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe vol. 10*, ed. Ernst Behler (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1969), xv.

<sup>17</sup> Rüdiger Bubner, "Zur dialektischen Bedeutung romantischer Ironie," *Die Aktualität der Frühromantik*, ed. Ernst Behler/Jochen Hörisch (Paderborn et al.: Schöningh, 1987), 85–95, 95; Behler "Introduction," xvi; Steven E. Alford, *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination* (New York et al.: Peter Lang, 1984), 17.

<sup>18</sup> Ernst Behler, *Ironie und literarische Moderne* (Paderborn et al.: Schöningh, 1997), 124.

<sup>19</sup> Behler, *Ironie und literarische Moderne*, 126.

<sup>20</sup> Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik* (Munich: Fink, <sup>2</sup>1999), 43.

<sup>21</sup> Andreas Arndt, "Zum Begriff der Dialektik bei Friedrich Schlegel 1796–1801," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 35 (1992): 257–273, 257; cf. Arndt, "Widerstreit und Widerspruch. Gegensatzbeziehungen in frühromantischen Diskursen," *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus/International Yearbook of German Idealism* 6 (2008): 102–122.

<sup>22</sup> Fichte, who had a profound impact on the early Romantics, might also be considered for having conceived of the dialethic nature of the limits of thought. Especially his late writings, beginning with the different versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre 1804*, are sometimes considered to overcome LNC and promote contradiction as the moving element of thought. For a more detailed treatment, which is beyond the scope of the present article, see: Schick, *Contradictio est regula veri*, 273–278. For the relation of common logic and transcendental logic both in Fichte's early writings and in his later writings see: *ibid.*, 192–250.

Diverging somewhat from both these interpretations, this paper argues that the question of the truth of contradictions is the essential point of departure between Hegel and the early German Romantics, especially Friedrich Schlegel.<sup>23</sup> To this end, the first part of this paper intends to show that Schlegel and the early Romantics were the original precursors of dialetheism, anticipating many arguments that doubted the universal validity of LNC. The second part analyzes Hegel's concept of contradiction. The final part reads Hegel's critique of romantic irony as a critique of dialetheism.

### 1. Friedrich Schlegel's Annihilation of LNC

For Kant, LNC is an undeniable principle of thinking and judging. A logical contradiction, since its object is a *nihil negativum*, entails nothing at all.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the antinomies discussed in the dialectics of pure reason play a significant systematic role in Kant's critique of pure reason. As these contradictions are implied in the speculative concept of the absolute or unconditioned, which is beyond any possible experience, they reveal the transcendental illusion which underlies pure reason's attempt to transcend the limits of experience.<sup>25</sup> Since reason cannot deny the validity of LNC, the absolute must lie beyond our capacity of pure reason.

In contrast to Kant, Friedrich Schlegel draws exactly the opposite consequence from the contradictory character of the idea of the absolute: the antinomies do not prove the human mind's incapability to conceive the absolute but the limited validity of LNC. Common logic, which is based upon LNC, is not the organon of *all* thinking but just of lower thinking. Since grasping the absolute demands a higher logic, some higher mental activity has to transcend LNC. Even more, the destruction of LNC is the first and

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<sup>23</sup> As Arndt correctly points out, for Schlegel, unlike Hegel, contradiction is not the dialectical engine immune to all self-movement but just the limit of logical comprehension (Arndt, "Perspektiven frühromantischer Dialektik", 61). This supports Bowie's and Millán-Zaibert's thesis that the absolute for the Romantics cannot be grasped by reflection, and this is therefore a crucial factor distinguishing early Romanticism from Hegel. See Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 37. It also supports Manfred Frank's thesis of the autonomy of early Romanticism in relation to Hegel. Cf. Manfred Frank, „Unendliche Annäherung“. *Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), pp. 21; 23f.

<sup>24</sup> *KrV B*, AA 3, 233; 399. Writings by Kant are quoted from: Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften and Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin and Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen (Berlin: 1900ff.) (= AA).

<sup>25</sup> *KrV A*, AA 4, 07.

foremost presupposition for the human mind to apprehend the absolute.<sup>26</sup> The logical faith in LNC is just based upon an ill-founded dogmatic article drawing upon a kind of religious furor,<sup>27</sup> whereas both our everyday and our scientific experience contradict this faith and confirm the existence of contradictions:<sup>28</sup>

What finally also proves the uselessness of [this principle] is [t]he principle that we use in common life and are taught by experience, namely that *life* and absolutely everything rest upon *contradictions*—further, the similar proposition of physics that everything in nature rests upon *oppositions* and exists through *oppositions*—but still more the *contradictions* about *one* and *the same* object among different sciences and on different systems.<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, the “antinomies should not have moved Kant to dismiss the absolute, but the *law of non-contradiction*.”<sup>30</sup> But Schlegel goes even further: Contradictions are not only an unwanted but inevitable side-effect of our attempt to grasp the absolute, but in connecting otherwise incompatible opposites, contradictions are true expressions of the absolute:

If one becomes infatuated with the absolute and simply cannot escape it, then the only way out is to contradict oneself continually and join opposite extremes together. The principle of contradiction is inevitably doomed, and the only remaining choice is either to assume an attitude of suffering or else ennoble necessity by acknowledging the possibility of free action.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> As Schlegel’s fellow Romantic Novalis puts it: “To annihilate the law of non-contradiction is perhaps the highest task of higher logic.” (*Fragments and Studies 1799–1800*, HKA III, 570; cf. 402.) Writings by Novalis are quoted from: Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe in sechs Bänden*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn, Richard Samuel, Hans-Joachim Mähl, Gerhard Schulz et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960-...) (= HKA).

<sup>27</sup> “One expects everyone else to believe in [it] and excommunicates everyone acting against [it].” (*Philosophical Fragments* II/I, frgt. 1314, KFSa 18, 303.) Writings by Schlegel are quoted from: Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler et al. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1959ff.) (= KFSa).

<sup>28</sup> *Philosophical Fragments* I/III, frgt. 2, KFSa 18, 123.

<sup>29</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 321. Apparently, Schlegel does not distinguish between different types of opposition in order to justify his position about contradictions in reality.

<sup>30</sup> *Philosophical Fragments* II/II, frgt. 1080, KFSa 18, 410.

<sup>31</sup> *Blütenstaub*, frgt. 26, KFSa 2, 164; tr. Peter Firchow, *Friedrich Schlegel. Philosophical Fragments* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 17. As Novalis puts it: “The highest representation of the incomprehensible is synthesis – unification of the incommensurable – positing of contradiction as non-contradiction.” (HKA II, 111.)

Unlike Kant, Schlegel does not decide to remain affectedly passive but postulates the position of contradictions in order to express and conceptualize the absolute. Giving a detailed argument for the abandonment of the universal validity of LNC, his choice is far from being arbitrary:

1. LNC maintains “that an object cannot be and at the same time not be.”<sup>32</sup>
2. This proposition is nothing but the inversion of the law of identity (LI) “a is a.”<sup>33</sup>
3. LI presupposes the persistence of “a.” Otherwise, a<sub>2</sub> in “a is a” can not be identical with a<sub>1</sub>.<sup>34</sup>
4. Therefore, LI presupposes the idea of “a substance which is identical with itself, immutable, and persistent.”<sup>35</sup> Or, put differently, one can only apply LI and LNC to persistent substances or thing-like entities.<sup>36</sup>
5. Hence, the universal validity of LI and LNC depends on the ontological assumption that all beings are essentially immutable substances or that the whole of reality comprises a sum of persistent things – a presupposition generally ignored by Aristotelian logicians.<sup>37</sup>
6. Any entity which is not thing-like is at the same time non-identical and one can only explicate such an entity in contradictory propositions.

The great question for Schlegel – and Novalis as well – now is whether there are any entities which are not thing-like and need to be explicated in contradictory propositions. And, indeed, one can find three types of reality which force us to transcend both LI and LNC in Schlegel and Novalis.

A: In Novalis’ *Miscellaneous Remarks*, we find the following statement: “Everywhere we *seek* the unconditioned [*das Unbedingte; the un-thing-ified*], and

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<sup>32</sup> *Propaedeutics and Logic*, KFSa 13, 258.

<sup>33</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 318.

<sup>34</sup> “While one is saying a=a, a already is not a anymore; this refers to what the proposition presupposes without mentioning it, namely the principle of persistence, whether one ascribes it to the thing or the I.” (*The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 318.)

<sup>35</sup> *Propaedeutics and Logic*, KFSa 13, 260.

<sup>36</sup> “Doubts against the concept of a persistent substance, if they were really justified and there would not be an a in this sense, [would] completely annihilate the theoretical validity of the principles of identity and non-contradiction.” (*Propaedeutics and Logic*, KFSa 13, 260.)

<sup>37</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 249; 317; *On Philosophy* 1805/I, frgt. 113, KFSa 19, 53. Lukasiewicz will come to the same conclusion more than 100 years later (Lukasiewicz, *Über den Satz des Widerspruchs*, 107; 135).

we *find* merely things [*Dinge*].”<sup>38</sup> For the early Romantics, by definition, the absolute as the unconditioned (“das Un-bedingte”) cannot be a thing (“Ding”). And since the absolute is not a thing, LNC cannot apply to it. Kant’s antinomies therefore do not reveal the unknowability of the absolute but its non-thing-like and therefore contradictory nature. Kant correctly calls contradictory entities an absurdity (“Un-ding”),<sup>39</sup> but misconceives the absolute as a thing and not as an “Un-Ding.” Therefore, he submits it to the Aristotelian logic of non-contradiction and limits the use of reason to finite, conditioned entities, whereas for Schlegel, confronted with the antinomies of pure reason, reason has to realize that in the face of the absolute one has to acknowledge the truth of contradictions.<sup>40</sup> Since all true infinities are at the same time absolute, only finite conditions, which are restricted to a specific time and a specific place, are subject to LNC. Any explication of the absolute, however, must synthesize antithetical concepts or propositions in order to point out that the restrictions of finitude do not apply to it:<sup>41</sup>

Whoever has a sense for the infinite and knows what he wants to do with it sees here the result of eternally separating and uniting powers, conceives of his ideals at least as being chemical, and utters, when he expresses himself decisively, nothing but contradictions.<sup>42</sup>

Kant’s “ideas” and “ideals” (the instantiations of an idea in an individual) are the most prominent examples of such infinite and unconditioned beings, which “are all based on synthesis and contradiction, floating, and oscillating.”<sup>43</sup> In the language of Priest, these infinities are true *dialetheias*.

But Schlegel goes even further than to consider only infinite entities as dialethic. From an absolute point of view, no real being is subject to Aristotle’s substantial ontology and therefore to LNC. Only within the limits of our everyday praxis is LNC a useful tool, whereas its use in philosophy is

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<sup>38</sup> *Blüthenstaub*, HKA II, 413; tr. Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860. The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 145. Similarly, Schelling writes in *Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy*: “For absolute (unbedingt) is that which is not turned into a thing, not at all can turn into a thing.” (KSA I,2, 89.) Works by Schelling are quoted from Schelling, *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Jörg Jantzen, Wilhelm G. Jacobs et al. (Frommann-Holzboog: Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1976ff.) (= KSA).

<sup>39</sup> *KrV B*, AA 3, 233.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. also Bärbel Frischmann, *Vom transzendentalen zum frühromantischen Idealismus. J. G. Fichte und Fr. Schlegel* (Paderborn et al.: Schöningh, 2005), 152.

<sup>41</sup> *On Philosophy* 1805/I, frgt. 289, KFSa 19, 71.

<sup>42</sup> *Athenaeum* frgt. 412, KFSa 2, 243; tr. Firchow, *Philosophical Fragments*, 83. Schlegel goes even further: “Everything which is of any value at all, has to be this and the opposite at the same time.” (*Philosophical Fragments* I/II, frgt. 633, KFSa 18, 82.)

<sup>43</sup> *Philosophical Fragments* I/III, frgt. 4, KFSa 18, 123.



“completely reprehensible.”<sup>44</sup> Since the absolute is not isolated from the realm of finitude but is its ground, its totality, and its all-unity, both realms cannot be opposed in an absolute manner. The reality outside of the I is not just Fichte’s thing-like *Not-I*, but a vital *you*.<sup>45</sup> “The world is an infinite I coming into being” or “*a deity coming into being*.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, to conceive finite entities in their truth means to conceive them in their relation to their ground, i.e. *sub specie infinitatis*, and hence not as persistent substances but as organisms, which are kinds of totalities and unities. Not substantiality but organicity is the true mode of being of finite objects.<sup>47</sup> In contrast to the Aristotelian ontology of substances, real beings in their truth therefore are organic unities which undergo permanent change.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, as far as it is truly real, everything partakes in the absolute and, as a consequence, is contradictory.

*A\**: We have just seen that for Schlegel, the absolute is opposed to LNC ( $a \wedge \neg a$ ), which only holds for finite and dependent beings. But one also finds another view in Schlegel which seems to fly in the face of the things said thus far. According to this view, it is exactly the limitation of finite beings which makes them subject to contradictions. In contrast, the absolute in itself is beyond all contradictions but unfolds itself in an infinite overabundance of opposed finite beings. Whereas its mutually dependent elements entail contradictions, the absolute itself supersedes all oppositions:

The whole is consistent with itself, only in its elements are there contradictions; both, the condition and the contradictions, dissolve into the *singular*, unitary absolute.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 320; 350; *Athenaeum* frgt. 83, KFSa 2, 178. The same idea can be found in Lukasiewicz, *Über den Satz des Widerspruchs*, 167: “The law of non-contradiction is not of any logical value but in its nature only practical-ethical.”

<sup>45</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 350.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>47</sup> Alford, *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination*, 9.

<sup>48</sup> Of course, according to some interpreters, Aristotle’s concept of substances is itself modelled according to his concept of organisms and his concept of generation as actuality coming into being is designed to resolve certain contradictions that seem to trouble our experience of reality. Even according to Schlegel himself, the concept of coming into being resolves many contradictions evolving in the science of the I: “Only through the concept of coming into being and the dismissal of all being was it possible to solve the antimony of sensation and with it the whole riddle of our I.” (*The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 338.)

<sup>49</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 321.

Contradiction inheres all things insofar as they are reifications and therefore finitisations of the infinite absolute.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, oppositions only have a “relative validity”<sup>51</sup> and contradictions are only true “in a relative manner for the elements, and not for the whole,”<sup>52</sup> such that “higher reflection” has to annihilate all oppositions when thinking and speaking about the absolute.<sup>53</sup> Whereas finite beings are contradictory, the absolute is above all oppositions. It is the indifference of two opposed errors.<sup>54</sup> Thus, it is less opposed to LNC but rather opposed to the law of the excluded middle  $\neg(a \vee \neg a)$  (LEM) whereas finite entities are opposed to LNC.

Before we relate these two types of contradictions to each other, let us first focus on the methodological implications of Schlegel’s dialetheism *avant la lettre*: We have seen that for both Schlegel and Priest, infinities imply true contradictions. Insofar, Schlegel anticipates dialetheism. But despite these obvious similarities, there is an important difference between Schlegel’s and Priest’s dialetheism, which mostly concerns the methodology of how both deal with true contradictions. As already noted, Priest in his paradoxical calculus avoids the triviality of his dialethic logic by refuting the disjunctive syllogism and EFQ. In contrast, Schlegel affirms EFQ since both LNC and the law of sufficient reason (LSR) can only be applied to persistent substances (things).<sup>55</sup> Yet, as we already know, whenever some entity implies a true contradiction, it cannot be a thing. As a consequence, LSR does not apply to dialethic beings either. Therefore, higher thinking is not determined by both these laws of logic. As a consequence, true contradictions indeed do not have a determinate result. But for Schlegel, this does not imply triviality. Just as for Priest, a true contradiction does not make any proposition or contradiction true. True, since LSR has become invalid, there is no logically determined rule for the sequence of thoughts determining a contradictory being. But we have to keep in mind that we are not in the realm of common thinking, but in the realm of higher thinking, and this is only known to the romantic poet. Only romantic poetry is truly infinite as it “recognizes as its first commandment that the [arbitrary] will of the poet can tolerate no law

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<sup>50</sup> Andreas Arndt, “Perspektiven frühromantischer Dialektik,” *Das neue Licht der Frühromantik. Innovation und Aktualität frühromantischer Philosophie*, ed. Bärbel Frischmann and Elizabeth Millán-Zaubert (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 53–64, 56

<sup>51</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSA 12, 321.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 92. Cf. Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung*, 523f. who maintains that both Schlegel and Novalis championed a coherence theory of truth, pp.523f.

<sup>55</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSA 12, 249.

above itself.”<sup>56</sup> Because it is not determined by the rules of logic anymore, the poetic imagination is set free to establish logically unfounded propositions. And this is the only appropriate mode to represent the absolute: “Only through the imagination, are we able to think and synthesize what is contradictory.”<sup>57</sup> Contradictions concerning the absolute entail the annihilation of LSR with the result that the ingenious poetic imagination can proceed freely now. Put differently, the logical annihilation of logic results in the apotheosis of the poetic imagination. The positive result of the annihilation of LSR together with LNC is poetic freedom. Only the poetic genius, not the philosopher who is restricted by Aristotelian logic, can express the absolute which transcends all oppositions: “*inducing* and *correlating* (therefore the whole of *sylogistics*) must perish with the *conditioned*, according to the strict doctrine of the absolute.”<sup>58</sup> True philosophizing for Schlegel is in no need of a logical methodology or a deductive system, but of a poetic spirit. This spirit “consists of continuous contradictions”<sup>59</sup> and cannot “be taught by some methodology, it is immediate and cannot be communicated.”<sup>60</sup> Resulting in contradictions, philosophy annihilates itself as philosophy and becomes poetry.<sup>61</sup> Where the philosopher only has “night-lamps,” the poet walks “by the light of revelation.”<sup>62</sup>

The result of a true contradiction is thus in some way Kant’s *nihil negativum*,<sup>63</sup> but it is a prolific nothing setting free the romantic genius’s poetic imagination as an “arbitrary, and therefore free thinking”<sup>64</sup> and an “inner, free, arbitrary thinking and poetizing”<sup>65</sup> with the power to create from nothing.<sup>66</sup> The annihilation of logic and LSR logically justifies the poetic logic of the imagination. Only romantic poetizing is truly free, since it recognizes no law above itself. And only in acts of freedom, can one present the absolute. Therefore, it is only the poetic imagination that can present the absolute, and not logical reasoning, which is still bound by the laws of logic.<sup>67</sup> Contrary to

<sup>56</sup> *Athenaeum frgt.* 116, KFSa 2, 183; tr. Firchow, *Philosophical Fragments*, 32.

<sup>57</sup> *System of Transcendental Idealism*, KFSa I, 9,1, 326f.

<sup>58</sup> *On Philosophy*, KFSa 19, 73f.

<sup>59</sup> *Philosophical Fragments I/II*, frgt. 192 KFSa 18, 36.

<sup>60</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 350.

<sup>61</sup> Alford, *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination*, 42.

<sup>62</sup> *Athenaeum frgt.* 131, KFSa 2, 186; tr. Firchow, *Philosophical Fragments*, 35.

<sup>63</sup> Klaus Vieweg, *Philosophie des Remis. Der junge Hegel und das ‚Gespenst des Skepticismus‘* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1999), 189.

<sup>64</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 358.

<sup>65</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 359.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. also Vieweg, *Philosophie des Remis*, 188.

<sup>67</sup> As Novalis puts it: “Poesy is the true absolute real. That is the core of my philosophy. The more poetic, the more true.” (*Preliminary Works*, HKA II, 647; tr. David W. Wood.)

the philosopher sticking to lower logic, the Romantic's imagination is not subjected to the concept of things, but can create figurative or symbolic expressions of the absolute. These figures and symbols are anti-things, brought about by the I "to free itself from the domination of things, the non-Is."<sup>68</sup> In her production of symbols and figures, the productive genius expresses the absolute. Whereas reason by its tendency to unify and harmonize everything cannot accept true contradictions and therefore necessarily falls short of the absolute and life, imagination by its acceptance of true contradictions comprehends the absolute and "life in its rich contradictoriness and individuality."<sup>69</sup>

Whereas this affirmation of EFQ by Schlegel apparently contrasts with Priest's dialetheism, one can find a similar idea in the later Wittgenstein. According to Wittgenstein, the prohibition of contradictions means nothing more than to make use of a system with some great pragmatic advantages. But this does not imply that one cannot employ contradictions. For example, one might intentionally produce logical contradictions just to prove "that everything in the world is uncertain."<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, a contradiction might also tell us: "Do as you wish, I, the calculation, do not decide it. [...] One might conceive this as a hint of the Gods that I shall act and *not* reflect."<sup>71</sup> In this sense, Schlegel explicates the philosophical advantages of true contradictions: they reveal that the absolute cannot be represented within a philosophical system. With LNC, the "logical fiction"<sup>72</sup> of a system loses its philosophical value too. For a philosophical system, it is essential that each of its elements has a determined place within the system according to a sufficient reason. But since LSR, confronted with the absolute, has lost its value together with LNC, the absolute cannot be represented within a coherent system. This is why Schlegel does not represent the absolute in a system but in contradicting fragments. Only a fragment can "capture the sense in which what cannot be 'represented' in consciousness can nonetheless be 'hinted at' in art."<sup>73</sup> The connection and sequence of these fragments is not necessitated by LSR but by the free imagination of the poetic genius. Thinking the absolute is not supposed to follow any given rules or to be

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<sup>68</sup> *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 359.

<sup>69</sup> Behler, *Ironie und literarische Moderne*, 105.

<sup>70</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 211.

<sup>71</sup> Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*. The Bergen Electronic Edition. Text only version, Oxford et al. 1999 (Abbrev. according to v. Wright Catalogue), MS 127, p. 83.

<sup>72</sup> *Philosophical Fragments* II/I, frgt. 1348, KFSa 18, 306.

<sup>73</sup> Pinkard, *German Philosophy*, 160.

subordinated to any principles.<sup>74</sup> Instead, it has to begin with ungrounded and at the same time contradictory propositions. Since one fragment can only express a limited and definite thought, the single fragments have to contradict each other to express the absolute:

Not only must philosophy begin with *unfounded* propositions, but also with *contradictory ones*.<sup>75</sup>

Each fragment either expresses a or non-a, i.e. each thought can only express a limited thought that is opposed to another thought. Therefore, the absolute itself is absolutely opposed to the thoughts articulated in a fragment.<sup>76</sup> For as we have already seen, the infinite absolute transcends all contradictions (A<sup>\*</sup>). But propositions about the infinite absolute are finite, as they attribute finite predicates to the absolute. Thus, we have a new type of contradiction A<sup>\*\*</sup>, namely the contradiction between the necessary finitude of our propositions and the infinity of the absolute.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, since we can only express the absolute in finite thoughts, we have to express it in paradox thoughts (by contradictions of type A).<sup>78</sup> Only by violating LNC, i.e. in pairing opposed thoughts, can we express the absolute, which is beyond all contradictions, through finite thoughts. Schlegel calls this kind of self-contradicting discourse: *ironic*.<sup>79</sup> This self-contradiction is not something we have to overcome, but the defining feature of romantic irony and the only possible expression of the absolute through finite thoughts in spite of A<sup>\*\*</sup>, since it also expresses the impossibility to communicate the absolute by finite thoughts.<sup>80</sup> As we are at the same time finite and infinite beings we cannot give up thinking about the absolute.<sup>81</sup> But we can never fully justify any thought about the absolute, since finite thoughts cannot articulate the infinite. Irony

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<sup>74</sup> Böhm, *Dialektik bei Friedrich Schlegel*, 99. The connection of the fragment and freedom is also pointed out by Bubner: “For the fragment manages to leave things open, things that can themselves be thought out further through the unconstrained freedom of subsequent recipients and later generations.” Bubner, *The Innovations of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 192.

<sup>75</sup> *Philosophical Fragments* II/II, frgt. 1045, KFSa 18, 407.

<sup>76</sup> Manfred Frank, “Philosophische Grundlagen der Frühromantik,” *Athenäum* 4 (1994): 37–130.

<sup>77</sup> Beiser, *German Idealism*, 408.

<sup>78</sup> *Lyceum*, frgt. 48, KFSa 2, 153.

<sup>79</sup> *Athenaeum*, *Ideas*, frgt. 69, KFSa 2, 263.

<sup>80</sup> Lore Hühn, “Das Schweben der Einbildungskraft. Zur frühromantischen Überbietung Fichtes,” *DVjS* 70 (1996): 569–599, 571. Alford, *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination*, 60.

<sup>81</sup> Bärbel Frischmann, “Was ist ironistische Philosophie?,” *Das neue Licht der Frühromantik. Innovation und Aktualität frühromantischer Philosophie*, ed. Bärbel Frischmann and Elizabeth Millán-Zaubert (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 80–93, 82.

therefore is the appropriate mode to communicate both our inescapable commitment to and our inescapable detachment from the absolute or both our finite and infinite nature.<sup>82</sup> Ironic discourse, therefore, is “the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts,”<sup>83</sup> the “constant alternation of self-creation and self-destruction.”<sup>84</sup> According to Schlegel, Socratic irony already produced this feeling “of indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication.”<sup>85</sup> In this sense, the method of all philosophy has to be ironic or Socratic.<sup>86</sup> This irony is the result of a unity which is always absent, but at the same time intended by romantic discourse. Ironic discourse therefore necessarily formulates true contradictions. The absolute, since it is infinite, can only be expressed by *dialetheias*, but these syntheses of antitheses do not express the absolute in itself or give a true definition of its very own nature but rather our relation to the absolute:<sup>87</sup>

Irony makes us aware of the tensions between our limitations and the infinite nature of the Absolute, between what we can know and the vast expanse of what remains to be known. Any attempt to *completely* communicate the Absolute or the infinite is futile. Yet the philosopher has a duty to make this impossibility apparent, and the philosopher does this by revealing the limitations of philosophy itself and the need to go beyond its traditional borders in search of broader ones.<sup>88</sup>

## 2. Hegel on LNC

At first glance, Hegel’s view on LNC is quite similar to that of Schlegel and *dialetheism*:

- a) Hegel apparently questions the universal validity of LNC<sup>89</sup> and affirms the truth of contradictions, for example in his habilitation-thesis: “*Contradictio est regula veri, non contradictio falsi.*”<sup>90</sup> Revealing the

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<sup>82</sup> Pinkard, *German Philosophy*, 160f.

<sup>83</sup> *Athenaeum*, frgt. 121, KFSa 2, 184; tr. Firchow, *Philosophical Fragments*, 33.

<sup>84</sup> *Athenaeum*, frgt. 51, KFSa 2, 172; tr. Bubner, *The Innovations of Idealism*, 211. Cf. also Beiser, *German Idealism*, 448f.

<sup>85</sup> *Lyceum*, frgt. 108, KFSa 2, 160; tr. Firchow, *Philosophical Fragments*, 13.

<sup>86</sup> Bubner, *The Innovations of Idealism*, 202.

<sup>87</sup> Irony in this sense means the “absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses” (*Athenaeum*, frgt. 121, KFSa 2, 184).

<sup>88</sup> Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, “Borderline Philosophy? Incompleteness, Incomprehension, and the Romantic Transformation of Philosophy,” *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus* 6 (2008): 123–144, 131.

<sup>89</sup> Rolf-Peter Horstmann, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 1991), 170.

<sup>90</sup> *Habilitation Thesis*, GW 5, 227.

claim “that there is nothing contradictory”<sup>91</sup> as a simple prejudice of previous logic, Hegel maintains that there is nothing which is not subject to contradiction, i.e. opposing determinations.<sup>92</sup> By summoning our everyday experience that there are countless things, theories, and institutions which contain a contradiction, Hegel comes close to Schlegel.

- b) And there is more in Hegel which is congenial to Schlegel: Just like Schlegel, Hegel does not consider contradictions as “contingencies,” “abnormalities,” or pathological paroxysms, which occur every now and then, but as “the root of all movement and vitality.”<sup>93</sup> Hegel therefore considers Kant’s “proposition of the *necessity of contradictions*” as one of Kant’s most fundamental philosophical insights.<sup>94</sup>
- c) Hegel criticizes Kant’s solution of the antinomies as an unjustified “tenderness” for the *world*, which forces him to remove the contradiction from reality and to blame our thinking for the antinomies of reason.<sup>95</sup>
- d) Unlike Kant and exactly like Schlegel, Hegel considers the contradiction as “the elevation of reason above the limitations of understanding and its dissolution.”<sup>96</sup>

Despite these apparent similarities, Hegel’s logic of reflection in the *Science of Logic* reveals striking differences between his own view and Schlegel’s view. First of all, the denial of LNC does not transcend common thinking but is still entangled in it. The alternative to *either* affirm *or* abnegate the validity of LNC means to *either* affirm *or* negate one opposite of a contradiction in its isolation while excluding the opposing one. Sustaining this either–or, one’s thinking is still subjugated to common understanding’s LEM. Schlegel’s annihilation of LNC therefore fails his speculative claim to overcome the abstract logic of common understanding. To overcome common logic’s LNC effectively, one must not annihilate common thinking but apprehend it. This means to explicate LNC’s presuppositions which are unknown to common thinking. The untruth of common logic consists in its abstraction from the speculative interrelations of identity, difference, opposition, and contradiction which constitute these determinations of thought that underpin LNC,

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<sup>91</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 286.

<sup>92</sup> *Encyclopedia* 1830, GW 20, 129.

<sup>93</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 287.

<sup>94</sup> *Ohlert Review*, GW 16, 279.

<sup>95</sup> *Science of Logic* 1832, GW 21, 232.

<sup>96</sup> *Science of Logic* 1832, GW 21, 30. Cf.: *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 258 and 287.

LI, and LEM:<sup>97</sup> the determination of identity, which common logic conceives as abstract equality for example, is constituted by the abstraction from any difference. This abstract identity is understood as the very determination of thought which is *not* difference but “different from difference.”<sup>98</sup> Thus, it is in fact essentially established by its opposition to difference and determined by its exclusion of difference. Despite being conceived as pure identity, it is “something different.”<sup>99</sup> The concept of pure or abstract identity, therefore, is self-contradictory, since it is supposed to exclude all difference but is at the same time determined by its difference from difference.

In contrast to speculative logic, common logic cannot resolve this dialectical result, as it does not reflect on the speculative process which constitutes identity, but takes the result of this process, i.e. abstract identity, as an immediate content of consciousness. Common logic misconceives identity as immediate equality with itself and is thus characterized by its “lack of being conscious about the negative motion”<sup>100</sup> which is constitutive for its concepts. As a consequence, identity is not what it is, since it does not match its concept, namely: the exclusion of difference.<sup>101</sup> In contrast, speculative logic resolves the dialectics of identity as it explicates the process which constitutes identity, namely its inherent negation of negation (difference). For speculative logic, identity is nothing but the self-referential negation, i.e. the difference from difference, by which identity is constituted. It is exactly the surplus value of LNC over LI that indicates this “contamination” of identity with negativity. The twofold negation in “A is not non-A” at least insinuates the self-referential negation which constitutes identity. Other than LI, LNC not only enunciates “A” but also “non-A” as “the purely-other of A.”<sup>102</sup> But this non-A is just posited to be negated by “is not.” Hence, LNC expresses identity “as negation of negation”<sup>103</sup> or the result of a mediating process, whereas LI only posits the result of this process as the immediate equality of “A” with itself.

To make this point clearer, an explanatory note to the concept of identity in the *Science of Logic* analyzes tautology as an instantiation of LI: due

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<sup>97</sup> Cf. Manfred Zahn, “Die Idee der formalen und transzendentalen Logik bei Kant, Fichte und Hegel,” *Schelling-Studien. Festgabe für Manfred Schröter zum 85. Geburtstag*, ed. Anton Mirko Kocktanek (Munich/Vienna: Oldenbourg: 1965), 153–191, 165.

<sup>98</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 262.

<sup>99</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 262.

<sup>100</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 263.

<sup>101</sup> In general: Things which do not match their concept represent a contradiction: on the one hand, they are what they are, on the other hand, they are not what they are (Pippin 2016, 187).

<sup>102</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 265.

<sup>103</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 265.



to its lack of reflection, common thinking does not grasp that there is a contradiction inherent in tautologies, namely a contradiction between the content of the tautology and its form as a sentence. As its essential feature, the tautology asserts a predicate of its subject which is *not different* from the subject (e.g. “A flower is – a flower.”). Psychologically, tautological sentences cause boredom by frustrating the anticipation of their addressees who expect the predicate to determine the subject by a content which is different from the subject.<sup>104</sup> This psychological phenomenon mirrors the contradiction between the intention of a tautology as a sentence (to determine the subject by a different predicate) and its content. A sentence intends the difference between its subject and predicate, but identical sentences negate this intention. From this, Hegel concludes that “identical speech contradicts itself.”<sup>105</sup> With “A is,” the sentence starts to say something different from “A” in a predicate, but the repetition of “A” in the predication annihilates this difference and returns to “A.” For common logic, this dialectics of tautologies is intractable, whereas for speculative thought, tautologies are neither pointless nor contradictory. From a speculative point of view, the tautology implicitly expresses the mediating process of the self-constitution of identity, namely the position and annihilation of difference.

As a first result, Hegel’s distinction between speculative and common logic can be characterized as follows: Speculative logic explicates the self-referential negative movement which establishes identity, whereas common logic just takes the result of this process as immediately given. Common logic thus abstracts from the process by which identity is constituted and therefore it is untrue (not false).<sup>106</sup> For Hegel, one cannot overcome common logic and its devotion to LNC by tossing it away but by reflecting on the process which constitutes common logic’s determinations of thought, i.e. identity, difference, opposition, and contradiction. Whereas for Schlegel common logic cannot be applied to the absolute as it can only be apprehended by contradictory determinations, for Hegel it is common logic’s concept of identity itself which is contradictory. From Hegel’s point of view, Schlegel therefore still takes identity in its immediate givenness and does not overcome common logic. Speculative logic is not a different kind of thinking compared to common logic but is common logic reflected in itself and has thereby become conscious of its own presuppositions. In contrast to Schlegel, Hegel’s higher thinking does not replace common thinking, but explicates its implicit presuppositions.

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<sup>104</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 264.

<sup>105</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 264.

<sup>106</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 263.

Despite these differences, for both Hegel and Schlegel, the concept of contradiction is connected to the concept of the absolute or infinity. But Hegel does not consider infinity as a transcendent being which surpasses all possible determination, but, quite the opposite: it is the result of a logical process determining all our logical concepts. To make this point clearer, we can again refer to Hegel's determination of identity. No concept can be infinite or absolute as long as it depends on and is limited by a concept which is exterior to it. Thus, as long as identity is defined as the abstract negation of difference, it is limited by difference and is therefore not infinite. For common logic, it is all too clear that identity excludes difference from itself by distinguishing itself from difference (identity is defined as being opposed to difference).<sup>107</sup> Therefore, difference is external to identity, i.e. identity is determined by and thus depends on a concept which is exterior to it and is therefore finite. But a limited or finite concept cannot be applied to the absolute since it cannot contain infinity. And this is why common logic cannot grasp the absolute or infinity.

But as we have already seen, for speculative logic difference is not only essential to identity but identity is nothing but the difference ( $d_1$ ) from difference ( $d_2$ ) as the determined negation of  $d_2$ . But since there is no difference between  $d_1$  and  $d_2$ , for both are nothing but difference  $d$ , identity as reflected in itself not only negates  $d_2$  but (since  $d_1=d_2$ ) also  $d_1$ , i.e. it negates both difference as such and its difference from difference. Therefore, identity is identical with the absolute difference, the latter one being nothing but the absolute difference from difference, i.e. not just a difference in some respect but the difference from being different at all. In other words: absolute difference and absolute identity are absolutely identical. Both difference and identity merge into their respective opposite: the position of identity necessarily results in difference and vice versa.

As a result, difference and identity are no longer limited by and dependent on an exterior concept, since they have become identical. The most famous example of this rather abstract structure is of course Kant's antinomies: if one posits the world as temporally infinite, this necessarily results in the finitude of the world. But if one posits the world as temporally finite, this necessarily results in the infinity of the world. "Contradiction" in

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<sup>107</sup> Regarding the following thoughts see especially: Dieter Henrich, "Hegels Grundoperation," *Der Idealismus und seine Gegenwart. Festschrift für Werner Marx zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Ute Guzzoni et al. (Hamburg: 1976), 208–230; Henrich, "Formen der Negation in Hegels Logik," *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (1974): 245–256; Stephan Grotz, *Negationen des Absoluten: Meister Eckhart, Cusanus, Hegel* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2009), 258ff.; Schick, *Contradictio Est Regula Veri*, 364ff.

the sense of a thought determination is exactly this antinomic transition of difference into identity and vice versa, in which both identity and difference disappear into their respective opposite.<sup>108</sup> For Hegel, this disappearance is itself a form of unity, namely “the *zero*.”<sup>109</sup> the cancellation or negation of difference and identity. Yet this negation is not an undetermined or abstract negation but the determined negation of a determined negation, namely the negation of identity and difference – more specifically: the negation of the exclusion of their respective opposite.<sup>110</sup> As a consequence, contrary to both Schlegel and Kant, a contradiction for Hegel has a determined consequence or a positive result as its solution: a unity in which difference and identity are not opposites per se but two essential moments constituting this unity. This unity, of which both difference and identity are just moments, is identified by Hegel with the thought determination of “ground.” Therefore, as a result of its immanent contradiction, identity did “not only perish (*zu Grunde gegangen*),” but “went back into its ground (*in seinen Grund zurückgegangen*).”<sup>111</sup> The same holds for all philosophical determinations and notions: from their identity with themselves they merge into their opposite and become contradictory. As a result of this contradiction, they go back into their ground (e.g. actual law is the ground of positive law and natural law, comprising both as its moments, whereas a purely positive law is not law but just coercion by power and a purely natural law is not a law but just an unenforceable optative). The result of a speculative contradiction, therefore, is not EFQ as the negation of the principle of sufficient reason but exactly the very determination of thought which underlies this principle.

### 3. Hegel’s Critique of Romantic Irony

We have seen that for both Hegel and Schlegel there are contradictions that necessarily occur. For Schlegel, just as for dialetheism, these contradictions are true contradictions. Therefore, dialetheism obviously pursues more a Romantic project and not a Hegelian project. Put differently: Not Hegel but Schlegel is the true precursor of dialetheism. For Schlegel, true contradictions cannot be resolved logically. Instead, they set the poetic imagination free. Thus Schlegel—just like Graham Priest—wants to transcend and go

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<sup>108</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 280.

<sup>109</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 280.

<sup>110</sup> According to Brandom, determinate negation is exclusive negation: “For Hegel, it is this exclusiveness that is the essence of negation.” Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead. Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 179.

<sup>111</sup> *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 282.

beyond the limits of thought whereas Hegel criticizes the Romantics for their rejection of LNC, LSR, and of all logical methodology and their replacement of them with the poetic imagination and romantic irony.<sup>112</sup> For Hegel, all contradictions have to be resolved within logical thought. Even more, the contradiction has in itself the logical resources for its solution and sublation in its ground. It is just the result of the reflection of abstract identity and is just an intermediate phase of the reflection of abstract identity into itself resulting in the ground as the absolute and concrete identity reflected into itself. The eventual end of logic for Hegel is not, as for Schlegel, the transgression of logical methodology but the comprehension of logical methodology, which is at the same time the solution of all contradictions in logic. Contrary to Schlegel and dialetheism, Hegel does not dismiss the universal validity of LI and LNC but tries to speculatively reconstruct their true meaning. Hegel does not claim to annihilate common logic but to apprehend and thereby substantiate it. From Hegel's point of view, Schlegel's annihilation of common logic and its substitution by the poetic imagination and irony does not overcome common logic. Rather, it merely sets an excessive subjectivity against objective thinking. Schlegel's ironic I does not resolve contradictions, but his irony keeps them as true contradictions. The unresolved contradiction lets him flee "all that is objective."<sup>113</sup> Schlegel's irony therefore lacks the "desire of *thinking reason*"<sup>114</sup> for objective truth. It is nothing but "the subjectivity knowing itself as the highest,"<sup>115</sup> since for Schlegel there is no objective reason that subjectivity would have to accept for its proceeding from a contradiction. Quite the contrary, the ingenious subjectivity of the Romantic genius can proceed without having to obey LSR. From the point of view of Hegel's logic, Schlegel's irony thus represents the "*randomness and arbitrariness of subjective sentiment and its opinion.*"<sup>116</sup> Schlegel's dialectics "degrades all determination to a futile illusion in the free play of the I's genius."<sup>117</sup> Hegel therefore criticizes the affirmation of antinomies in Schlegel's concept of irony. Irony does not resolve the contradiction, but preserves it in thought. According to Hegel, Schlegel

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<sup>112</sup> Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic. From Being to Infinity* (Purdue University Press, 2006), 31.

<sup>113</sup> *Foreword Hinrichs*, GW 15, 139.

<sup>114</sup> *Solger-Review*, GW 16, 99.

<sup>115</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, GW 14,1, 132; cf. SW 20, 416.

<sup>116</sup> *Foreword Hinrichs*, GW 15, 138.

<sup>117</sup> Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik*, 49.

hence falsely claims his concept of irony is related to Socratic irony.<sup>118</sup> For Plato and Socrates, irony only concerns the sophistic consciousness, not the idea itself. Thus, it is an attitude which concerns persons and not infinity itself. Whereas for Schlegel contradiction is the ultimate result of logical speculation, Plato's dialectics tries to resolve contradictions. Plato did not take dialectics as the final result of thought or as the proper way of dealing with ideas, but, unlike Schlegel, he dissolved dialectics and subjectivity into the substantiality of the idea.<sup>119</sup> On the contrary, Schlegel, the modern "father of irony,"<sup>120</sup> considered contradiction to be the final result of possible logic. According to Hegel, Plato's concept of irony and Schlegel's irony therefore just share the same name. Contrary to his very own intention, Schlegel does not act any different from Kant, for both are not able to solve the contradiction. Thus, both cannot reconcile the seeming contradiction between logical thought and infinity or the absolute.

Of course, there are good reasons not to share Hegel's evaluation of Schlegel's irony and his acceptance of true contradictions.<sup>121</sup> One might also share Schlegel's assessment of Hegel's dialectics: Schlegel criticizes Hegel for returning "completely into the empty room of absolute thought again."<sup>122</sup> Like Adorno, Schlegel blames Hegel for not tolerating contradictions but resolving them and dissolving difference into an allegedly absolute identity. For Hegel, Schlegel's criticism is as follows: "the essence of spirit in general consists in the annihilation of an opposite."<sup>123</sup> Therefore, one might also hold that not the solution but the toleration of contradictions is the highest attainment of human thinking. Similar to Novalis, Schlegel, and Priest, one could hold that absolute truth or infinity can only be thought in a contradictory manner.<sup>124</sup> But, as we have underscored, this is neither an anticipation nor a continuation of Hegel's speculative logic but rather a counter project to it.

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<sup>118</sup> Contrary to Hegel, Behler sees in Socratic irony and Schlegel's irony two different manifestations of the same frame of mind: an ancient one and a modern one. Cf. Ernst Behler, *Studien zur Romantik und zur idealistischen Philosophie* (Paderborn et al.: Schöningh, 1988), 14.

<sup>119</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, GW14,1, 132.

<sup>120</sup> *Solger-Review*, GW 16, 98.

<sup>121</sup> Bubner, *The Innovations of Idealism*, 213f.

<sup>122</sup> *Philosophy of Life*, KFSa 10, 16.

<sup>123</sup> *Philosophy of Life*, KFSa 10, 93. Cf. J. Zovko, "Hegels Kritik der Schlegelschen Ironie," *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (2007): 148–154, 149f.

<sup>124</sup> Arndt, "Widerstreit und Widerspruch," 111.

#### 4. Conclusion

We have seen that Graham Priest cannot claim Hegel as a precursor of dialetheism since for Hegel there can be no true contradictions. Contradictions might be correct but they can never be true, since a contradictory state of affairs is unstable and has to make way for a state of affairs in which the contradiction is dissolved.<sup>125</sup> Hegel therefore does not reject, but rather radicalizes LNC.<sup>126</sup> For Hegel criticizes the metaphysical assumptions underpinning traditional logic: identity is not just a quality of real beings, but “a requirement of thought.”<sup>127</sup> Being that is thought is not immediately identical to itself, but only as a result of mediation, the movement of reflection.<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, we have maintained that dialetheism is not without forerunners in Classical German Philosophy. These forerunners are the early Romantics, especially Friedrich Schlegel. They do not anticipate Hegel but develop a highly original idea of true contradictions and a way of dealing with them: by evoking contradictions, we transcend the limits of logical thought and give way to a higher form of intellectual activity, namely, the poetic imagination. Ernst Behler therefore correctly distinguishes Schlegel’s “changing stream” “of thinking and counter-thinking”<sup>129</sup> as “a ‘floating’ without reason and soil”, and Hegel’s dialectics as a teleological process.<sup>130</sup> Whereas Hegel’s philosophy tries to find reason and order within the apparent chaos of human nature, for Schlegel, the beginning of all poetry is to cancel the laws of reason and logical thinking and to restore “the beautiful confusion of phantasy, the original chaos of human nature.”<sup>131</sup> But this does not mean that Friedrich Schlegel rejects philosophy and logic in favor of an irrational subjectivity, but grounds the power and freedom of the poetic imagination in higher speculation, namely, in the dissolution of LNC. He therefore presents not only a literary or poetic but also a philosophically

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<sup>125</sup> Anton Friedrich Koch, *Die Evolution des logischen Raumes: Aufsätze zu Hegels Nichtstandard-Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 5.

<sup>126</sup> Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, 179.

<sup>127</sup> Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*, 44.

<sup>128</sup> Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*, 45.

<sup>129</sup> *Philosophy of Language and the Word*, KFSa 10, 353.

<sup>130</sup> Behler, *Ironie und literarische Moderne*, 93.

<sup>131</sup> *Conversation on Poetry*, KFSa 2, 319.

relevant alternative to Hegel's speculative logic,<sup>132</sup> thereby anticipating a number of recent trends in contemporary logic.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> For the relation of philosophy and art in Schlegel and also Novalis see especially: David W. Wood, "From 'Fichticizing' to 'Romanticizing'. Fichte and Novalis on the Activities of Philosophy and Art," *Fichte Studien* 41 (2014): 247–278.

<sup>133</sup> I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their feedback which helped improve this paper, and the editorial team of *Symphilosophie*.





# Symphilosophie

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## L'« ironie romantique » comme procédé musical

L'exemple de Tieck, Brahms, Wagner et Weber

(Partie II)

*Manfred Frank*\*

### RÉSUMÉ

L'ironie au sens où l'entend le premier romantisme allemand répond à l'exigence impossible en même temps que nécessaire d'exprimer « l'inconditionné » dans un langage « conditionné ». L'ironie romantique résout le dilemme en tenant en suspens la teneur spécifique de ce qui est dit par la *manière* dont cela est dit. C'est-à-dire qu'en même temps qu'elle dit quelque chose, elle annule son propre dire. C'est ce que la musique, art du temps par excellence, peut particulièrement faire, comme je le montre à l'appui de la mise en musique par Brahms des *Lieder* de la *Magelone* de Tieck et de quelques exemples tirés de la musique et de l'esthétique de Wagner.

*Mots-clés* : premier romantisme allemand, ironie, inconditionné, musique, Tieck, Brahms, Wagner, Weber

### ABSTRACT

According to early German romanticism, irony responds to the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of expressing the “Unconditioned” in “conditioned” language. It resolves this dilemma by suspending the specific content of what is said through *how* it is said. In other words, irony suspends while speaking what has been said. Music, as the temporal art par excellence, is able to do this in a special way, as I show in Brahm's musical setting of Tieck's *Magelone Lieder* and some examples of Wagner's music and aesthetics.

*Keywords*: Early German Romanticism, irony, the Unconditioned, music, Tieck, Brahms, Wagner, Weber

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\* o. Prof. Dr. Dres. h.c. i. R., Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Philosophisches Seminar, Bursagasse 1, 7270 Tübingen – [manfred.frank@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:manfred.frank@uni-tuebingen.de)

Partie II\*\*

Je voudrais vous faire entendre un troisième *Lied* du cycle de la *Maguelone*. Ce *Lied* a beau être un des sommets de l'œuvre poétique du premier romantisme allemand, il semble moins approprié pour illustrer la question qui nous intéresse. Il se compose de trois strophes dont la forme ne varie qu'imperceptiblement tout au plus du point de vue métrique et rythmique. Ces infimes variations, il nous faut chercher à les cerner avec d'autant plus d'attention. Je dirai même qu'écouter la poésie de Tieck suppose, comme chacun sait, une ouïe aussi fine que l'ouïe d'un lézard, et il nous faut la diriger vers les nuances subtiles par lesquelles le poème dément tacitement sa sémantique manifeste. Considérons d'abord le texte (texte III) :

Ruhe, Süßliebchen, im Schatten  
Der grünen, dämmernden Nacht:  
Es säuselt das Gras auf den Matten,  
Es fächelt und kühlt dich der Schatten  
Und treue Liebe wacht.  
Schlafe, schlaf ein,  
Leiser rauscht der Hain,  
Ewig bin ich dein.

*Repose-toi, doux amour, dans l'ombre  
de la nuit verte qui tombe :  
L'herbe frémit sur les pâturages.  
L'ombre t'évente et te rafraîchit,  
Et un fidèle amour veille.  
Dors, endors-toi,  
Le bois bruit doucement,  
Je serai à toi éternellement.*

Schweigt, ihr versteckten Gesänge,  
Und stört nicht die süßeste Ruh'!  
Es lauschet der Vögel Gedränge,  
Es ruhen die lauten Gesänge,  
Schließ, Liebchen, dein Auge zu.  
Schlafe, schlaf ein,  
Im dämmernden Schein,  
Ich will dein Wächter sein.

*Taisez-vous, chants dissimulés,  
Et ne dérangez pas le repos le plus doux !  
La foule des oiseaux écoute,  
Leurs chants bruyants se calment,  
Ferme tes yeux, mon amour,  
Dors, endors-toi,  
Dans les lueurs du crépuscule,  
Je veux être ton gardien.*

Murmelt fort, ihr Melodien,  
Rausche nur, du stiller Bach.

*Murmurez encore, mélodies,  
Chante donc, calme ruisseau.*

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Schöne Liebesphantasien	<i>De belles fantaisies amoureuses</i>
Sprechen in den Melodien,	<i>S'expriment dans les mélodies,</i>
Zarte Träume schwimmen nach.	<i>De doux rêves flottent après elles,</i>
Durch den flüsternden Hain	<i>Dans les bois qui susurrent</i>
Schwärmen goldne Bienenlein	<i>De petites abeilles dorées voltigent</i>
Und summen zum Schlummer dich ein <sup>33</sup> .	<i>Et chantonnent pour t'endormir.</i>

Je passe sur tous les autres aspects qui mériteraient notre attention et me concentre sur la façon dont le poème (mais aussi la mise en musique de génie que Brahms en a donnée) peut se comprendre comme illustrant l'ironie romantique. Le poème tout entier est hanté par une tension entre ce qui est dit et ce qui est suggéré, sans être dit, par le seul rythme et la seule qualité sonore – à travers, par conséquent, des éléments que, normalement, on considère comme non pertinents pour le sens. C'est ainsi qu'un sens caché, voire refoulé, se trame à contre-courant de la signification exprimée. Quel sens ? Pour répondre à la question, il nous faut prendre en compte le contexte immédiat de la légende de la *Belle Maguelone de Naples et du comte Pierre de Provence*. Presque tous les poèmes de Tieck, du reste, ont la particularité d'avoir besoin, pour être interprétés, d'être éclairés par le contexte de l'action ou de l'histoire en prose dans lequel ils sont enchâssés. Toute parole, même poétique, doit, aux yeux de Tieck, être située, singularisée, et le discours ne parvient à ces effets qu'en lien avec d'autres discours qui excèdent son cadre. Là encore nous avons affaire à la façon romantique de voir comme fragmentaire tout dire défini : la substance sémantique du discours s'enrichit et se charge de manière inépuisable d'un surcroît de sens au contact avec des contextes inattendus – comme membre d'un « *infinitinomial* », pour reprendre le mot de Novalis<sup>34</sup>. C'est donc la multiplicité des à-côtés qui nourrit un poème avec tout ce qu'il contient de contextes réels et possibles, et qui pétrit son sens. Chaque sentiment, était-il dit dans le *Livre sur Shakespeare* à propos de ce que Tieck nomme la « série des affects », tend à tirer sa richesse du précédent ou d'un autre sentiment : « passant à un degré plus grand de chaleur, plusieurs sentiments s'associent au précédent, des

<sup>33</sup> Ludwig Tieck, *Phantasia*, in L. Tieck, *Schriften in zwölf Bänden*, hg. von Manfred Frank, Frankfurt a.M., Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, vol. 6, p. 277 sq. ; *Les Romances de la Maguelone de Ludwig Tieck*, trad. P. Mathé, en ligne, [https://www.opera-lille.fr/fichier/o\\_media/11018/media\\_fichier\\_fr\\_.cdm\\_belle.maguelone.pdf](https://www.opera-lille.fr/fichier/o_media/11018/media_fichier_fr_.cdm_belle.maguelone.pdf), consulté le 6 décembre 2020.

<sup>34</sup> Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entrée n° 112, in Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, hg. von Paul Kluckhohn, Richard Samuel et al., Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1960-... (= NS), vol. 3, p. 261 ; *Le Brouillon général*, trad. O. Schefer, Paris, Allia, 2000, p. 42.

perspectives toujours nouvelles s'ouvrent<sup>35</sup> ». Ce qui se reflète au niveau linguistique par le fait que le mot proféré absorbe la sémantique propre à ses contextes comme un cristal scintille et brille des diverses lumières qu'il réfléchit.

L'intrigue est vite ajoutée. Pierre a enlevé la belle Maguelone ; elle l'aime et court sinon le risque d'être mariée à un chevalier de Naples pour lequel elle n'éprouve pas d'amour. Après une chevauchée nocturne longue et épuisante, Maguelone ressent une grande fatigue. Elle se laisse glisser du cheval ; on l'allonge doucement sous l'abri formé par le feuillage d'un grand arbre et elle demande à son bien-aimé d'ajouter sa propre voix suave à « l'enchevêtrement harmonieux » des voix de la forêt « pour que la belle musique soit complète<sup>36</sup> » : « Je vais tâcher de dormir un peu ; mais réveille-moi le moment venu, afin que nous puissions rejoindre bientôt tes chers parents ». Suit la berceuse. Avant d'écouter l'œuvre musicale qu'en a tiré Brahms, j'attire votre attention sur le fait que les mots de la belle Maguelone parlent à peine du repos et de la tranquillité auxquels, généralement, une dormeuse aime se livrer. Au contraire. L'« enchevêtrement harmonieux » des voix de la forêt ne saurait guère être plus grand : viennent s'y ajouter la voix du chanteur, puis le bruisant ruisseau soi-disant « calme » et les « petites abeilles [qui] chantonent ». Le *Lied* dément donc par sa forme l'intention déclarée de bercer la bien-aimée. Dans la version parallèle du *Volksbuch* sur lequel Tieck s'est fondé<sup>37</sup>, l'éveil du désir de Pierre, puis son essor, sont pour ainsi dire exprimés. La *maestria* de Tieck consiste à laisser se manifester par la musique, en quelque sorte, l'intention tacite (laquelle contredit l'intention explicite). La mise en musique de Brahms renforce ingénieusement ce trait : au lieu de s'engourdir, le chant se déploie d'une strophe à l'autre de plus en plus passionnément, avec une tension toujours accrue, en suivant le vocalisme étincelant et le rythme toujours plus agité des vers, la forme mettant le contenu en question. Le désir naissant des deux amants se déplace ainsi avec art de sa formulation presque explicite dans le *Volksbuch* vers la musicalité et la gestualité, par où il peut seulement se manifester (« se montrer », pourrait-on dire avec Wittgenstein). Dans la troisième strophe, le « calme ruisseau » est comme exhorté à « murmure[r] encore », à ne faire « que chanter » – et Brahms fait puissamment élever la voix à son chanteur. Ainsi –

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<sup>35</sup> Ludwig Tieck, *Das Buch über Shakespeare*, in L. Tieck, *Schriften in zwölf Bänden*, vol. 6, p. 117.

<sup>36</sup> Ludwig Tieck, *Phantasia*, p. 277 ; cf. le commentaire des p. 1316 et 1321 sq. [Le *Volksbuch* est un genre narratif en prose de la littérature germanophone du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, puisant dans la culture populaire. N.d.l.T.]

<sup>37</sup> Voir *ibid.*, p. 1321 sq.

de façon ironique au sens théorique – une intention déterminée est-elle plongée par des moyens artistiques extra-sémantiques dans une indétermination qui en annule le contenu ou le renverse dans le sens opposé sans qu'intervienne l'effet comique ordinairement associé au discours ironique.

Dans le *Volksbuch*, qui est à la base de la refonte raffinée de l'histoire par Tieck, ce désir naissant est le tournant dramatique du récit. Il déclenche un enchaînement de malheurs, de souffrances, d'épreuves. Alors que sa bien-aimée paraît endormie, Pierre a « l'impression » que Maguelone est oppressée :

[...] alors il dénoua légèrement son vêtement, les voiles de ses draperies laissèrent apparaître son sein blanc. Ravi par l'indicible beauté, Pierre pensait être au ciel ; elle attirait tous ses sens ; il ne pouvait s'empêcher de se repaître du spectacle et de se griser de l'éclat de sa beauté<sup>38</sup>.

Il finit par remarquer, caché entre ses seins, le petit contenant dans lequel Maguelone garde les trois anneaux que Pierre lui a offerts. Pierre les saisit ; ce qui devait arriver arrive : un affreux corbeau noir fond sur lui, emporte le butin dans son bec, et le lâche dans la mer ; Pierre embarque dans un bateau pour repêcher les anneaux, une tempête se lève et le pousse vers le large, vers une terre lointaine.

Tout cela a trait à la sémantique explicite du poème. Seule l'oreille peut percevoir la part d'ironie dans la manière dont le poème est composé : par le travail sur tous les registres de sonorité des syllabes et le rythme rapidement changeant, extrêmement agité – autant d'éléments contrecarrant l'intention de bercer la bien-aimée. Brahms n'aurait pas pu mettre en musique pareille tension avec une plus grande habileté qu'il ne l'a fait.

Écoutez à présent la musique :

[Extrait n° 3 : « *Ruhe, Süßliebchen, im Schatten, / Der grünen dämmernden Nacht* », interprété par Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, accompagnement de Sviatoslav Richter ; extrait à écouter ici : <https://symphilosophie.com/manfred-frank-partie-ii/> ]

Dans les années qui ont suivi l'écriture des chants de la *Maguelone*, Tieck s'est aventuré dans des expérimentations poétiques bien plus audacieuses. Je vous en présenterais volontiers un échantillon si je ne contreviens pas, ce faisant, à la règle de la concision. Ces formes totalement déséquilibrées, très dissonantes, auxquelles les critiques de l'époque reprochaient déjà leur difformité et cacophonie (comme par exemple, le chant au clair de lune du roman *Les Pérégrinations de Franz Sternbald*), n'ont pas été mises en musique

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.

– et ce n’est, bien sûr, pas un hasard. La théorie romantique de la musique est conservatrice malgré toute son audace avant-gardiste (je pourrais vous citer des exigences des plus étonnantes, qui se trouvent en particulier dans l’œuvre de Novalis : il réclame une « production intentionnelle [...] du hasard<sup>39</sup> », ou un « *langage n* universel de la musique<sup>40</sup> » : « Le faire N avec l’organe N est l’objet de cet art et théorie de l’art universels<sup>41</sup> ». Novalis affirme d’ailleurs que « les plus grands chefs-d’œuvre sont tout simplement *déplaisants* – Ce sont des idéaux qui ne peuvent – et ne *doivent* – nous plaire qu’approximativement – des impératifs esthétiques<sup>42</sup> »). Je dirai que les premiers romantiques allemands sont aussi conservateurs dans leurs goûts musicaux, et même – comparativement – dans leur pratique musicale, qu’ils sont audacieux dans les inventions de leur imagination esthétique. Il nous faut donc regarder bien plus avant dans le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle pour rencontrer une évolution des techniques d’écriture musicale adaptée à l’irrégularité et à polytonalité de la poésie de Tieck – une technique où, pour la première fois, le mélodrame lyrique est radicalement mis en pièces.

Adorno a apporté la démonstration d’une dissolution de la distinction entre thèmes et variations avant tout dans l’œuvre de Brahms (et à travers l’impact particulier qu’a eu sur la formation du style musical de Schönberg la musique de Brahms<sup>43</sup>) ; et on peut mieux comprendre l’intérêt que Brahms a pu éprouver pour Tieck, précisément, à la lumière de cette démonstration.

Cela vaut également – d’une autre manière tout aussi prometteuse – de la « mélodie infinie » wagnérienne. Bien que l’on ait objecté – à juste titre – que cette unique occurrence de l’expression dans les *Œuvres complètes*<sup>44</sup> de Wagner n’offrait aucune prise pour l’interprétation, Wagner aurait voulu désigner par là une technique, ou un genre, de composition. C’est dans ce sens, du moins, que l’expression est demeurée dans l’histoire de la réception<sup>45</sup>. Et ce pour des raisons qui renvoient aux propos de Wagner lui-même. D’une part, il attache une grande importance au fait d’avoir, dans ses

<sup>39</sup> Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*, entrée n° 953, NS III, p. 451 ; cf. *Le Brouillon général*, p. 236.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, entrée n° 245, p. 283 sq. ; *ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, entrée n° 92, p. 257 ; *ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, entrée n° 745, p. 413, cf. entrée n° 748 ; *ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>43</sup> Voir Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Frankfurt a. M., Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1958, p. 57 (en contexte).

<sup>44</sup> Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen*, Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1871-1883 (= *SSD*), vol. VII, p. 130 ; les œuvres complètes de Wagner ont plusieurs fois été rééditées en éditions grand public.

<sup>45</sup> Fritz Reckow, « Zu Wagners Begriff der unendlichen Melodie », in *Das Drama Richard Wagners als musikalisches Kunstwerk*, hg. v. Carl Dahlhaus, Regensburg, Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1970, p. 81-103, en particulier p. 93, 99 et 103.

dramas musicaux, aboli en « un flux musical ininterrompu, véritablement inédit » la différence entre les airs et les récitatifs, et de les avoir égalisés sur une même ligne mélodique<sup>46</sup>. Ce procédé aurait permis d'affranchir entièrement l'intrigue « de la nécessité de trouver sa justification [de l'extérieur]<sup>47</sup> ». « C'est désormais la musique qui, en nous faisant incessamment participer aux sentiments, nous permet en même temps de faire état de l'action avec une extrême netteté<sup>48</sup> ». On a enfin ici un flux ininterrompu de motivations, qui rend toute différenciation extrinsèque entre passages thématiques et orchestraux impossible. Wagner désigne notoirement cet « entrelacement continu de l'orchestre à ce qui est l'affaire des chanteurs » le *Durch-Komponieren*<sup>49</sup> de l'œuvre musicale-langagière, qui ne fonde pas sa vision sur des unités closes sur elles-mêmes, plus réduites – thèmes ou arias – mais « sur un réseau de thèmes fondamentaux (*Grundthemen*) traversant l'œuvre tout entière<sup>50</sup> ». Cette forme de phrase musicale est la seule à rendre compte de la réalité du moi humain, dont l'essence est la temporalité, le défaut d'accomplissement présent, l'aspiration infinie. Bref : la transcendance.

Si cet océan [de sons musicaux] s'agite du fond de ses propres abîmes, s'il engendre la raison de son mouvement du fondement primordial de son propre élément, alors son mouvement est également un retour sur soi sans fin, jamais apaisé, éternellement inassouvi, sans cesse excité par ce à quoi il aspire<sup>51</sup>.

Plus loin, Wagner évoque le thème romantique essentiel d'une aspiration infiniment insatisfaite :

Dans le royaume de l'harmonie, [...] il n'y a ni commencement ni fin : ainsi se consume l'ardeur du cœur où brûle un désir qui n'a pas d'objet et ignore sa source, qui n'est rien d'autre que lui-même, désir, aspiration, rage, langueur – mort à petit feu, soit la mort sans avoir tiré de satisfaction d'un objet, donc la mort sans mourir et, par suite, un perpétuel retour à soi<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Richard Wagner, *Über Schauspieler und Sänger*, SSD IX, p. 211.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Richard Wagner, *Über die Anwendung der Musik auf das Drama*, SSD X, p. 171.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185 ; cf. *Mitteilung an meine Freunde*, SSD IV, p. 322 et 202.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Wagner, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, SSD III, p. 83.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86 sq. ; cf. traduction in Henri Lichtenberger, *Richard Wagner : poète et penseur*, Metz, Félix Alcan, 1911, p. 209. Il s'agit, soit dit en passant, d'une citation libre d'un passage de *Phantásus*, dans lequel Tieck caractérise la musique de Beethoven : cf. *Phantásus*, op. cit., p. 354 sq.

De cette citation, je retiens surtout l'idée que le sujet de cette aspiration ne tient plus pour essentielles des unités fragmentaires. Il ne peut se satisfaire d'aucun but ou objet singulier. Et cette impossibilité interdit de composer selon la méthode d'écriture de la sonate, par exemple, avec sa différenciation trop claire du thème et une réflexion subjective limitée dans le temps, qui se fonde à nouveau avec le thème dans la reprise et, en tant que sa mise en œuvre, n'échappe jamais à son contrôle.

De telles considérations semblent nous éloigner de notre objet, car elles tendent à glisser toujours plus du domaine de l'analogie entre la musique et la poésie dans le domaine de l'art tonal proprement dit. Ce n'est, à vrai dire, pas tout à fait le cas. Le drame musical de Wagner – en tant que le résultat d'une fusion et d'un dépassement des frontières entre des formes d'art différentes, dont l'art du verbe au premier chef – devait garantir, par la composition phonétique et rythmique de ses textes, qu'une mélodie infinie puisse se déployer sur la base de ceux-ci, libérée du lit de Procuste de formes stéréotypées. D'autant plus que l'uniformité métrique d'un poème et le retour de la rime incitent à s'accrocher à un schéma périodique régulier et à une syntaxe musicale uniforme. Si ces répétitions devaient être bannies, alors le rythme du vers du texte d'origine devait non seulement être forcément travaillé de manière irrégulière mais tâcher de faire varier sans arrêt la mesure venant d'être posée. Si aucune syllabe ou séquence de notes ne pouvait par principe être répétée<sup>53</sup>, alors il était judicieux de faire se répéter dans le texte, à titre d'exception, un seul type de mesure. Wagner écrit à ce sujet, dans *Communication à mes amis* :

Partout où l'expression du texte poétique me guidait avec tant d'autorité que mon sentiment ne pouvait admettre d'autre source pour la mélodie, celle-ci se trouvait bien préservée de toute relation forcée avec le vers, mais elle perdait d'un autre côté presque tout caractère rythmique [par là il entend la métrique au sens de A. W. Schlegel] ; dans ce processus, j'étais infiniment plus consciencieux et bien plus investi de ma tâche que lorsque, à l'inverse, je cherchais à insuffler à la mélodie une rythmique aléatoire. [...] Mais je compensais ce que ma mélodie perdait en

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<sup>53</sup> Cette autodiscipline de la mélodie en agaçait plus d'un parmi les critiques contemporains de Wagner : « Aucune répétition, pas même d'une syllabe, dans tout cet opéra, mais un déroulement du drame ininterrompu, vif, rapide, fougueux, orageux » (compte rendu sur le *Lohengrin* par le Baron von Biedefeld dans la gazette *Europa. Chronik der gebildeten Welt* du 19.10.1850). Cf. Fr. D. dans l'*Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* du 04.09.1850 : « Ça se poursuit sans alinéa jusqu'à ce que le rideau tombe : nul récitatif, nul *andante*, nul *caberletta*, nul duo [...] ; nulle part un moment de repos, partout du mouvement, de l'agitation, une force sauvage » (cité dans *Situationsgeschichte der Musikkritik...*, hg. v. Helmut Kirchmeyer, Regensburg, Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1968, vol. 3, Partie IV, col. 735 et 695).



détermination, ou mieux : en évidence, rythmique en insufflant une harmonie à l'expression, telle que moi seul pouvais en ressentir la nécessité pour la mélodie<sup>54</sup>.

Cette « animation rythmique de la mélodie à conquérir moyennant sa motivation à partir du vers, de la langue même<sup>55</sup> » aurait conduit Wagner à l'allitération, l'irrégularité métrique de celle-ci, sa souplesse dans la modulation le rendant à même d'« exprimer de la manière la plus infiniment variée » des sentiments spontanés. Ramener le langage musical à la prose – et en faire une technique de composition – est un moyen particulièrement approprié pour l'expression tonale de ce que Tieck appelle la « série d'affects ». Les affects ne sont pas désordonnés ; ils acquièrent leur rythme dans l'instant même de l'expression, en déterminant la mesure de l'ensemble de la série par la qualité des « sons » successifs, et non pas sous la contrainte extérieure d'une métrique stéréotypée. Ce qui était inévitable tant que le schéma de la période musicale formait la charpente de la mélodie. Dans ces conditions prescriptives auxquelles les genres musicaux étaient soumis, la série d'affects devait forcément se couler dans une mesure métrique. Car la régularité rythmique – le schématisme, pour le dire péjorativement – imprime une forme, dans son interaction avec l'harmonie et les motifs.

Des éléments mélodiques d'égale longueur tendent à se compléter l'un l'autre et, si l'harmonie et les motifs soutiennent leur association, ou du moins ne la contrarient pas, ils tendent à s'unir en un groupe. L'élément quantitatif remplit une fonction qualitative, syntaxique. Et la syntaxe musicale classique est bien hiérarchique : deux mesures correspondantes forment une phrase, deux phrases forment une demi-période, deux demi-périodes constituent une période. Un groupe de quatre mesures peut, sans nuire au principe de la correspondance, être réduit à trois mesures, ou s'étendre à cinq. Mais pour que la syntaxe reste compréhensible malgré cet accroc à la norme de la symétrie, le sentiment musical de l'auditeur doit être fortement imprégné de cette règle<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> Richard Wagner, *Mitteilung an meine Freunde*, SSD IV, p. 327. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 325, 328 et *Oper und Drama* [*Opéra et Drame*], p. 191 sq. ; cf. Carl Dahlhaus, *Schönberg*, Essais édités par Philippe Albèra et Vincent Barras, trad. Vincent Barras, Eeva Hyvärinen, Tiina Hyvärinen, Dominique Leveillé et Peter Szendy, Genève, Éditions Contrechamps, 2017, p. 29.

<sup>55</sup> Richard Wagner, *Mitteilung an meine Freunde*, SSD IV, p. 328.

<sup>56</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Richard Wagners Musikdramen*, Velber, Friedrich Verlag, 1971, réédition en Reclam (Stuttgart) de la 2<sup>nd</sup>e édition révisée, 1996 ; *Les drames musicaux de Richard Wagner*, trad. fr. Madeleine Renier, Liège, Pierre Mardaga, 1994, p. 110.

La syntaxe musicale de Wagner – la mélodie infinie – abolit cette norme de genre ; et il est significatif (pour notre propos) que cette abolition du rythme des vers allitérés aille de pair avec l'émancipation de la dissonance. À l'appui des onze premiers vers du récit de Waltraute dans *Le Crépuscule des dieux* :

Höre mit Sinn, was ich dir sage! –	Pèse le sens de mes paroles.
Seit er von dir geschieden,	Lorsque tu fus partie,
zur Schlacht nicht mehr	le dieu nous tint hors des batailles.
schickte uns Wotan;	Plus de règle,
irr und ratlos	nous chevauchons au
ritten wir ängstlich zu Heer.	hasard.
Walhalls mutige Helden	Au Walhall, loin des héros,
mied Walvater:	s'en va notre père.
einsam zu Roß	Sur son cheval,
ohne Ruh' und Rast	sans repos ni fin,
durchschweift' er als Wand'rer die	il parcourt en tous sens l'univers.
Welt <sup>57</sup> .	

Dahlhaus a montré de façon convaincante comment la modulation des sons – qui tendent à la prose – déconstruit formellement le schéma de la période musicale ; et que l'effet unifiant de l'allitération ou de la rime finale ne parvient pas à entraver les effets dissolvants et dissonants de la prose discursive comme de la « prose musicale »<sup>58</sup>. L'enchaînement des mesures ne suit pas non plus de règle ; il n'y a pas de logique identifiable dans la jonction des périodes : le seul ordre qui soit indéniable est celui de la « série des affects » qui s'étend à l'ensemble du drame comme un réseau infini – un texte – de *leitmotive* et à laquelle ne préside à aucun moment un système de règles traditionnel et extérieur, propre à l'économie du genre et qui

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<sup>57</sup> Richard Wagner, *Die Götterdämmerung*, Acte I, Scène 3, scène du rocher, SSD VI, p. 201 sq. [= texte IV]. Voici la suite du texte : « Jüngst kehrte er heim;/ in der Hand hielt er/ seines Speeres Splitter:/ die hatte ein Held ihm geschlagen./ Mit stummem Wink/ Walhalls Starke/ wies er zum Forst,/ die Welt-Esche zu fällen;/ des Stammes Scheite/ Meß er sie schichten/ zum ragenden Häuf rings um der Seligen Saal./ Der Götter Rat/ ließ es berufen;/ den Hochsitz nahm/ heilig er ein:/ ihm zu Seiten/ hieß er die bängen sich setzen,/ in Ring und Reih'/ die Hall' erfüllen die Helden. » ; « Hier, il nous revint ;/ dans sa main il tenait sa lance brisée,/ du glaive d'un brave rompue./ Muet, d'un signe, aux guerriers,/ il fit à l'instant le frêne du Monde abattre./ Le tronc en pièces, le bois s'amoncelle/ ainsi qu'un bûcher entourant l'auguste palais./ Les dieux y font leur assemblée/ Au trône sublime il s'assied./ Près de lui se rangent, tremblants, tous les autres./ En cercle, autour, la foule immense des braves. » (*Le Crépuscule des dieux*, Acte I, Scène 2, « Le récit de Waltraute », livret de l'enregistrement en studio dirigé par Georg Solti avec l'Orchestre philharmonique de Vienne, 1958-1965, p. 99).

<sup>58</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Richard Wagners Musikdramen* (dans l'édition Reclam), p. 104 sq., 135 sq. et 151 sq.

permettrait de distinguer entre airs et récitatifs, passages thématiques et variations.

La règle classique est supprimée dans la syntaxe musicale wagnérienne. Dans le premier acte du *Crépuscule des dieux*, les vers allitérés au début du récit de Waltraute sont assemblés irrégulièrement ; et il semble que Wagner ait ressenti l'allitération comme une compensation et une justification de l'irrégularité rythmique des vers. Cela signifierait que, toute minime que soit son importance musicale manifeste, l'allitération serait la justification poétique de la tendance wagnérienne à s'émanciper du schéma périodique musical, une tendance qui le poussa à renoncer à la symétrie des temps forts. [Suit la citation des dix premières lignes de du récit de Waltraute].

Seul un apologiste pris d'excès de zèle affirmerait que l'allitération est le signe sonore d'associations sémantiques et les exprime, et qu'ainsi, en règle générale, les allitérations et les accentuations de sens coïncident. Il n'est pas rare que, soit un accent principal ne soit pas porté sur la rime (1 : « *dir* », 8 : « *einsam* »), ou que la rime relie un mot accentué (« *mied* » dans le septième vers) à un mot sans importance (« *mutige* » plutôt que « *Helden* » dans le sixième vers.) Si, en conséquence, l'allitération joue un rôle minime dans l'association des mots – et on ne peut pas s'attendre à autre chose – l'effet dissolvant de l'irrégularité des vers ressort d'autant plus clairement. La longueur des phrases mélodiques, qui correspondent aux phrases du récit de Waltraute, varie sans suivre de règle apparente : 1 + ½ + 1 + 1 + 1 + 2 + 1 ½ + 1 + 1 + 1 ½ mesures. Sans exagérer, on peut parler de prose musicale. Et même les groupes qui naissent de l'association de phrases étroitement reliées sémantiquement, c'est-à-dire les complexes de phrases 1-3, 4-5, 6-7, et 8-10, sont irréguliers dans leur nombre de mesures : 2 ½ + 2 + 3 ½ + 3 ½. Les brèches dans l'assemblage des mesures, là où les phrases vocales commencent ou se terminent par des demi-mesures, sont comblées par des motifs orchestraux. Mais même la syntaxe musicale qui résulte de cet emboîtement de la mélodie vocale et instrumentale est tout sauf régulière. Car, premièrement, au sein de la « mélodie orchestrale », comme l'appelait Wagner, des groupes de deux, trois et quatre mesures alternent (le groupe de quatre mesures à la fin du passage considéré ici, le motif du voyageur, ne consiste pas en 2 + 2, mais en 1 + 2 + 1 mesures.) Deuxièmement, les phrases vocales et les motifs instrumentaux sont souvent entrelacés, plutôt qu'échelonnés : la première phrase vocale, de deux mesures et demies, est bien complétée par l'orchestre pour former un groupe de trois mesures ; mais la troisième mesure, qui fait fonction de mesure finale dans la mélodie vocale, sert de première mesure dans la mélodie orchestrale, de début d'un motif de deux mesures. Troisièmement, les motifs orchestraux de *L'Anneau* s'enchaînent, plutôt qu'ils ne se complètent harmoniquement et mélodiquement, ou ne se fusionnent comme sous-périodes, en une

période au sens de la syntaxe classique. La forme syntaxique fondamentale qu'utilise Wagner est la parataxe et non l'hypotaxe<sup>59</sup>.

[Extrait n° 4 : Gwendolyn Killebrew dans la Tétralogie du centenaire avec l'Orchestre du Festival de Bayreuth dirigé par Pierre Boulez, captation de 1980 ; à écouter ici (1:26:00) : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NABPAbNf-BY>]

Nous avons aussi parfois affaire déjà, dans une moindre mesure, à ce que Dahlhaus nomme « prose musicale<sup>60</sup> » au sujet de *L'Anneau du Nibelung* de Wagner dans les opéras de Carl Maria von Weber. Certes, seul *Euryanthe* est réellement *durchkomponiert* en une forme continue et sans répétition, *Der Freischütz* et *Oberon* sont plutôt des *Singspiele*, interrompus par des parties dialoguées, voire des parties narratives. Le passage connu sous le nom de « Scène et Air de Rezia » offre cependant une impressionnante illustration de la tendance romantique à l'émancipation de l'irrégularité prosaïque en musique. L'opéra, que Weber a achevé (ou presque) de composer à Londres en 1826, rend au fond caduque la distinction entre les récitatifs et les airs. C'est le rythme plutôt irrégulier de l'emploi fait ici de la prose qui définit la mélodie ; autrement dit, celle-ci se démarque de la régularité du schéma périodique classique tout aussi résolument que la « mélodie infinie » wagnérienne. Voici l'ouverture de cette scène :

Océan ! prodige immense ! Tel un serpent/ Tu enlacs l'univers !/  
Quel grandiose spectacle tu offres/ Quand, paisible, tu dors sous la clarté  
de l'aube !/ Mais lorsque tu te déchaînes/ Et enroules ta victime dans tes  
nœuds,/ Déchiquetant l'imposant vaisseau comme un roseau/ Océan, tu  
nous remplis de frayeur<sup>61</sup>.

C'est encore plus impressionnant dans l'original anglais :

Ocean! thou mighty monster!/ That lies circled like a green serpent,  
round about the world!/ To musing eye thou art an awful sight,/ When  
calmly sleeping in the morning light;/ But when thou risest in thy wrath,/  
As now, and fling'st thy folds around some fated prow!/ Crushing the  
strong ribbed bark as if it were a reed!/ Then, Ocean, art thou terrible  
indeed.

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<sup>59</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Richard Wagners Musikdramen* (cité d'après l'édition Reclam), p. 152 sq. ; *Les drames musicaux de Richard Wagner*, p. 111.

<sup>60</sup> L'expression « prose musicale » est en réalité de Wagner lui-même, dans *Opéra et Drame* ; cf. *SSD IV*, p. 114 et 116.

<sup>61</sup> Cité d'après la traduction française du livret original anglais de James Robinson Planché et du livret allemand de Theodor Hell, en ligne, <https://odb-opera.com/joomfinal/index.php/les-livrets/summary/115-weber/982-oberon>, consulté le 6 décembre 2020.

L'irrégularité métrique de ces lignes ne rivalise certainement pas avec celle des vers de Tieck ou de Wagner ; Weber est du reste bien plus conventionnel dans l'expression musicale et moins radical que Wagner s'agissant d'atteindre les limites de la tonalité. Il tolère la répétition de syllabes, et même (plus tard aussi) de lignes entières, ou la distribution d'une syllabe sur plusieurs sons. La tendance à la prose dans le livret d'origine a trait constamment à des passages en vers blancs qui favorisent une certaine régularité de la progression mélodique et cultivent le caractère chanté de l'*aria*. Weber ne généralise toutefois pas ce trait ; mis à part dans la jubilation des derniers vers, l'œuvre évite la répétition uniforme de syntagmes musicaux (si je peux m'exprimer ainsi). Le caractère mélodique se déploie insensiblement à partir du chant, auquel il reconduit tout aussi imperceptiblement. Dans les vers plus fortement liés rythmiquement qui suivent le passage venant d'être cité (voir *infra*, note 63), l'on perçoit à peine une rupture dans la composition par rapport au récitatif d'ouverture, qui présentait déjà des parties très fortement mélodiques. Comme si la mélodie était un visiteur bienvenu mais non sollicité, un cas limite assez accidentel au sein d'une série d'affects rythmiquement déchaînés, qui ne tient pas la mélodie en tutelle, du moins pas structurellement, mais exige que le rythme se réduise jusqu'à l'arythmie, que la syntaxe musicale se dissolve et que la progression mélodique épouse les propriétés de ces sentiments changeants imprévisiblement. Les mélodies liées au plan de la mesure métrique ont tendance à la fixité. Les mélodies de Weber, au contraire, ont, dans leur liberté de mouvement et leur imprévisibilité, une grâce tout à fait propre à ce Maître, jusque dans les parties sombres, dramatiques ou jubilatoires qu'un Wagner aurait empreint de plus de gravité et d'un pathos souvent dérangeant. À cet égard, Weber est, des deux compositeurs, le plus léger et – pour cette raison – le plus romantique. Un trait stylistique qui lui a valu bien des reproches, voire d'être dédaigné, tout comme son ami poète, Ludwig Tieck, son voisin à Dresde et son interlocuteur régulier, bien que réservé sur sa musique. Écoutez à présent la scène et l'Air de Rezia dans *Oberon* (dans la nouvelle dramaturgie de Walter Panofsky) :

[Extrait n° 5, avec Inga Nielsen dans le rôle de Rezia, Orchestre symphonique de Berlin dirigé par Marek Janowski ; extrait à écouter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0J8OZXQjjic> <sup>62</sup>].

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62

Ozean, du Ungeheuer! Schlangen gleich  
hältst du umschlungen rund die ganze Welt!  
Dem Auge bist ein Anblick voll Größe du,

Océan ! prodige immense ! Tel un  
serpent  
Tu enlaces l'univers !

wenn friedlich in des Morgens Licht du schläfst!  
Doch wenn in Wut du dich erhebst, o Meer,  
und schlingst die Knoten um dein Opfer her,  
zermalmend das mächtige Schiff, als wär's ein Rohr,  
dann, Ozean, stellst du ein Schreckbild dar.

Noch seh' ich die Wellen toben  
Durch die Nacht ihr Schäumen schleudern  
An der Brandung wild erhoben,  
Jede Lebenshoffnung scheitern! –

Doch still! Seh' ich nicht Licht dort  
schimmern?  
Ruhend auf der fernen Macht,  
Wie des Morgens blasses Flimmern

Heller nun empor es gluhet  
In dem Sturm, dess' Nebelzug  
Wie zerrissne Wimpel fliehet,  
Wie wilder Rosse Mähnenflug! –

Und nun die Sonn' erstrahlt! Die Winde  
lispeln leis;  
Gestillter Zorn wogt nur im Wellenkreis.  
Wolkenlos strahlt jetzt die Sonne  
Auf die Purpurwellen nieder,  
Wie ein Held nach Schlachtenwonne  
Siegreich eilt zur Heimat wieder. –

Ach, vielleicht erblicket nimmer  
Weder dieses Aug' ihr Licht!  
Lebe wohl, du Glanz, fur immer!  
Denn fur mich erstrahlst du nicht. –

Doch was glänzt so schön und weiß,  
Hebt sich mit der Wellen Heben?  
's ist die Möwe, sie schweift im Kreis,  
Wo die Flut raubt ein Leben!  
Heil! Es ist ein Boot, ein Schiff!  
Und ruhig segelt's seinen Pfad,  
Ungestört durch das Riff. –  
O Wonne! Mein Huon! Zum Ufer herbei!  
Schnell! Schnell! Diesen Schleier! Er weht!  
O Gott, sende Rat!  
Sie sehn mich! Schon Antwort! Sie rudern mit  
Macht!  
Huon! Huon! Huon! –  
Mein Huon! Mein Gatte! Die Rettung, sie  
naht!

Quel grandiose spectacle tu offres  
Quand, paisible, tu dors sous la clarté de  
l'aube !  
Mais lorsque tu te déchaines  
Et enroules ta victime dans tes nœuds,  
Déchiquetant l'imposant vaisseau  
comme un roseau  
Océan, tu nous remplis de frayeur. –

Je vois encore les vagues en furie,  
Moutonner dans la nuit,  
Déferler violemment  
Et réduire à néant tout espoir de survie !

Silence ! n'y a-t-il pas là-bas une lueur,  
Dans cette nuit profonde,  
Comme le pâle scintillement de l'aube  
Au sortir de la nuit.

L'azur rayonne  
Dans la tempête, les brumes  
Flottent au vent comme des fanions  
déchirés,  
Telles la crinière d'un sauvage coursier !

Et voilà que le soleil embrase le ciel ! les  
vents frémissent ;  
Le courroux s'est apaisé  
Le soleil rayonne sans nuage,  
Sur les flots pourpres  
Tel le héros qui, après l'ivresse de la  
bataille,  
S'en revient couvert de gloire.

Hélas, peut-être ne reverrai-je  
Jamais cette clarté !  
Adieu, lumière éclatante, à jamais adieu !  
Jamais plus je ne te verrai.

Qu'est-ce que cette blanche clarté, là-  
bas, au loin,  
Qui se soulève au gré des vagues ?  
Une mouette qui voltige  
Au-dessus de l'abîme !  
Non - ce n'est pas un oiseau ! cela se  
rapproche !  
Sauvée ! C'est un bateau, un esquif !  
Il glisse doucement sur l'eau,  
Contournant les récifs.  
Oh transport !  
O joie ! C'est Huon ! Il approche !

Dans la description que Carl Dahlhaus donne de la technique de composition de Wagner, on reconnaît les caractéristiques fondamentales de ce que Wilhelm Schlegel et (à sa suite) Schelling ont appelé la présence de la modulation sur le rythme. La libre subjectivité – entendons : le fait que la subjectivité ne se rattache à aucun absolu préexistant – se cherche sa propre mélodie conformément à la succession réelle de ses sentiments, et non plus selon un ordre régi par la syntaxe musicale de la composition classique ou par la contrainte métrique exercée par la tradition. Et comme les sentiments ne sont pas en eux-mêmes du langage, ils doivent se transmettre par le biais de médiums expressifs dont les qualités phonétiques laissent émerger le rythme de manière organique. Les syllabes « lourdes » – soit une syllabe renfermant une voyelle longue encadrée par plusieurs consonnes (par exemple, *Spätrot*<sup>63</sup>) – ralentissent l'articulation des sons ; d'autres, plus aiguës et légères (telles *wie rieseln die Quellen*<sup>64</sup>), accélèrent la prononciation du syntagme auquel elles appartiennent. La façon dont Wagner s'est emparé de l'idée prouve bien la valeur de ce que Wilhelm Schlegel et Schelling avaient nommé *modulation*<sup>65</sup>. Dans le drame musical aussi, et surtout, la ligne mélodique peut être déterminée essentiellement par la prosodie et la sonorité du texte mis en musique. Pour Wagner, la musique n'est qu'un instrument accompagnant le langage sous-jacent ; elle peut, par conséquent, être guidée, jusque dans ses propriétés musicales les plus subtiles, par la manière d'être du langage. La musique de Wagner tire, en fin de compte, les propriétés qu'on lui attribue d'ordinaire (dissonance, a-métrie, variabilité, annulation de la différence entre thème et variation, air et récitatif) de l'irrégularité du texte au point de vue rythmique et phonétique – irrégularité qu'elle épouse. Ce que l'analyse présentée ici a fait ressortir comme étant également, bien

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Rettung naht! Rettung naht! Rettung naht!

Vite ! vite ! le voile ! Il flotte au vent !  
 O Dieu, dis-moi que faire !  
 Ils m'ont vue ! Ils me font signe ! Ils font  
 force de rames !  
 Huon ! Huon ! Huon ! –  
 Huon ! mon époux, mon salut est  
 proche,  
 Mon salut est proche, mon salut est  
 proche, mon salut est proche.

<sup>63</sup> En français : « rougeur du soir » (N.d.l.T.).

<sup>64</sup> Littéralement : « comme coulent les sources » (N.d.l.T.).

<sup>65</sup> Les vues de A. W. Schlegel et de Schelling sont détaillées dans Manfred Frank, *Das Problem „Zeit“ in der deutschen Romantik*, Paderborn, München, Wien, Zürich, Schöningh, 2<sup>e</sup> éd. 1990, p. 370 sq.

que dans une bien moindre mesure, le trait principal du cycle des *Romances de la Maguelone*.

C'est ainsi que l'ironie romantique – et par là j'en viens à ma conclusion – peut, d'un objet majeur de la théorie esthétique, devenir un trait stylistique de l'art lui-même. Une répétition régulière ne garantit pas nécessairement à chaque discours, à chaque séquence musicale, un élan, pour les avoir délivrés de leur nature fragmentaire, isolée – comme c'était le cas d'une parole ou d'une composition classiques, symboliques. La variation infinie a plutôt pour conséquence de nous faire considérer le fragment comme n'ayant qu'une importance relative par rapport à tous les autres fragments, mais de telle sorte qu'un esprit de gaieté imprégnant tout et dissolvant tout – un « esprit éthéré » (*Äthergeist*), selon la formule de Tieck – flotte sur tous. Cet esprit ne prend pas parti pour l'un, contre l'autre ; c'est l'esprit de l'ironie romantique. Bien qu'il soit destructeur à l'égard de tout individu singulier ou de tout être fini, c'est un esprit foncièrement libéral : il apporte enfin un correctif, tout en souriant, à la fausse axiologie d'une morale partielle qui se présente comme universelle. Il convient aussi à une époque – la modernité, non la *postmodernité* – dont les croyances ne sont plus garanties par un fondement ultime. L'attitude « religieuse » ne décourage toutefois pas non plus d'office l'ironie. Dans la mesure où elle met au jour la « discordance » et la « disproportion » de la « vie » dans son ensemble, elle s'avère être une « preuve *a contrario* » de la caducité du fini en même temps qu'une preuve positive de la valeur supérieure de l'infini<sup>66</sup>. La poésie, la poésie romantique en particulier, parle de lui comme de son seul objet. Mais n'oublions pas le mot de Novalis : « ce dont on parle on ne le possède pas<sup>67</sup> ». On en revient donc à notre point départ : l'art est « aspiration à l'infini<sup>68</sup> » – nous le cherchons partout mais ne trouvons jamais que le fini. La musique en rend compte : comme présentification de l'ironie romantique.

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<sup>66</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel-Ausgabe*, hg. v. Ernst Behler unter Mitwirkung von Jean-Jacques Anstett und Hans Eichner, Paderborn, Darmstadt, Zürich, Schöningh, 1958 sq. (= KA), XVIII, p. 218, frag. n° 293 ; cf. *ibid.*, p. 213, frag. n° 207.

<sup>67</sup> Novalis, *Dialogen*, NS II, p. 671 ; « Dialogues », in Novalis, *Semences*, trad. O. Schefer, Paris, Allia, 2004, p. 264.

<sup>68</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, KA XVIII, p. 418, frag. n° 1168, et p. 420, frag. n° 1200.



# Symphilosophie

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## Between Romanticism and Idealism: Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger, Philosophy as the Thought of Revelation

(Part 2)

*Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak\**

### ABSTRACT

This article argues for a reading of Solger's philosophy centred on the concept of revelation (*Offenbarung*). It aims to show how in this philosophy, developed mainly between 1815 and 1819, ontology, epistemology, philosophy of art, philosophy of mythology and political philosophy, are all systematically articulated around the paradoxical experience of the revelation of the idea in existence. Solger attempts to develop a position that can integrate and surpass on the one hand the transcendental idealism of the early Fichte and Schelling's philosophy of identity, and on the other hand Jacobi's dichotomy between faith and knowledge. He shares with the romantics the concern for a philosophy that is itself life. Going beyond the reduction of Solger to a theorist of romantic irony or a proto-Hegelian lost in mysticism, the goal here is to more precisely determine his philosophy from out of itself and its links to the post-Kantian constellation.

*Keywords:* Solger, revelation (*Offenbarung*), faith, system, dialectics, idealism

### RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente une lecture de la philosophie de Solger centrée sur le concept de révélation (*Offenbarung*). Il s'agit de montrer comment dans cette philosophie, élaborée principalement entre 1815 et 1819, ontologie, théorie de la connaissance, philosophie de l'art et de la mythologie et philosophie politique sont articulées de manière systématique autour de l'expérience paradoxale de la révélation de l'idée dans l'existence. Solger cherche à élaborer une position qui puisse intégrer et dépasser, d'une part, l'idéalisme transcendantal du premier Fichte et la philosophie de l'identité de Schelling, d'autre part, la dichotomie jacobienne entre foi et savoir. Il partage avec les romantiques le désir d'une philosophie qui soit elle-même vie. Au-delà de la réduction de Solger à un théoricien de l'ironie romantique, ou à un pré-hégélien égaré du côté de la mystique, le but est ici de cerner sa philosophie à partir d'elle-même, et de ses liens à la constellation postkantienne.

*Mots-clés :* Solger, révélation (*Offenbarung*), foi, système, dialectique, idéalisme

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\* Permanent Researcher, French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS); Associate Professor, École normale supérieure (ENS), Paris. THALIM, INHA-Galerie Colbert, 2 rue Vivienne, 75002 Paris, France – mildred.galland@cnrs.fr

## Part II\*\*

### 3. Philosophy of Art: Symbol and Irony

#### a) Aesthetics and metaphysics

Beginning now with an examination of Solger's philosophy of art, the question arises as to how to interpret its place and significance within his philosophy as a whole. Is it a particular case of an application of his metaphysics, or does it signal a key function of artistic experience for his philosophy itself? Is the importance of aesthetics in the corpus simply *de facto* (Solger died before he could develop all the ramifications of his philosophy), or did the philosopher want to define a particular and unique status of art for philosophical reflection?

Historically, Solger's philosophy of art (*Erwin* and the posthumous *Lectures on Aesthetics*) has occupied a decisive position in the reception of his works. Certain commentators have even gone so far as to contend that Solger attributed to art the privilege of resolving by means of action the conceptual tensions inherent in the philosophical thought of revelation.<sup>101</sup> Others, in contrast, have underscored the primary and fundamental role of his metaphysics with regard to his aesthetics.<sup>102</sup> But as we will see later, on the one hand the contingent fact that Solger did not have time to publish an exposition of his political philosophy certainly led to a limited understanding of the concept of revelation, and of his philosophy as a whole. On the other hand, concerning the place of aesthetics in the system, Solger himself specifies that, among the different 'ideas' in which the essence reveals itself in our knowledge and in our existence – the true, the good, the blessed, the beautiful – none of them has an ontological priority over the others. They are different points of view on revelation that are equal in rank.<sup>103</sup> However, Solger also speaks of the philosophy of art as a *propedeutic*, if not for philosophy itself, then at least for the intuition of the idea.<sup>104</sup> If the content

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\*\* For Part 1 of this essay, see *Symphilosophie: International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism* 1 (2019): 39-59. <https://symphilosophie.com/symphilosophie-1-2019-eng/>

<sup>101</sup> See M. Ophälders, *Romantische Ironie* (see note 28).

<sup>102</sup> See J. E. Heller, *Solgers Philosophie der ironischen Dialektik* (see note 20); R. Herzog, *Die Bewahrung der Vernunft* (see note 21); M. Frank, *Das Problem 'Zeit' in der deutschen Romantik* (see note 21) and *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* (see note 64).

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, J. Heller, *Solgers Philosophie der ironischen Dialektik*, 123; M. Boucher, *K.W.F. Solger* (see note 19), 49.

<sup>104</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 10, M., 10; letter to Tieck, 15.07.1814, NS I, 316, Matenko 139. Cf. M. Ophälders, *Romantische Ironie*, note 40, p. 76.

of aesthetics is really nothing more and nothing less than first philosophy, then how are we to understand this ‘propedeutic’?

First, art presents the contents of revelation – that intimate unity of eternal essence and temporal existence – as unveiled, or re-produced, by a human activity. Not only through the *poiesis*, the artistic creation, but in the aesthetic experience of the spectator too revelation is seen *from the inside*, in the activity of consciousness – not from the outside as it occurs in nature. Furthermore, by presenting in *things* the very content that philosophy presents in *thought*, art presents this content in a more visible and paradoxical manner for ordinary consciousness.<sup>105</sup> If with Valeria Pinto we are to characterize Solger’s philosophy as a “phenomenology of revelation” because of the crucial role granted in this philosophy to the encounter with what exists, then we understand why art matters: because it unites the idea and phenomenon *in the phenomenon*, in the visibility of surfaces. After spending six weeks in Dresden, where he went every morning to the *Gemäldegalerie*, Solger notes that art, which unites “the most vivid and sensitive presence with the deepest ideality”, is particularly capable of making us understand the importance of *immediate experience* for philosophy. The unique “factuality” of artworks – these things that are not only objects – makes tangible for us the absolute fact of revelation. In them the matter, subjected to decay, obscurity, and destruction, becomes the garment of the idea. For in the work of art we not only find intimately united the concept and the intuition, the idea and the phenomena, but indeed *eternity and time*: the moment of aesthetic revelation is “the innermost reconciliation of the temporal with the divinity, insofar as the appearance itself is recognized as the presence of God.”<sup>106</sup>

Artistic revelation, therefore, grants us access with particular force to the condition itself of all finiteness: being (and being-known) only insofar as revelation and the self-annihilation of the idea.<sup>107</sup> The inquiry into the essence of the beautiful leads to a questioning of the essence of the finite,<sup>108</sup> of the appearance as such:

In short, we could say that art is our present real existence [*Dasein*] known and experienced in its essentiality.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> See e.g. M. Ophälders, *Romantische Ironie*, 36.

<sup>106</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 121.

<sup>107</sup> See Part One of this article, pp. 50-51.

<sup>108</sup> M. Ravera, preface to his Italian translation of *Erwin*, 17.

<sup>109</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 394. Cf. also 389-90.

## b) The two directions of artistic activity: enthusiasm and irony

In a letter to his brother in July 1815 that was to furnish a key to reading *Erwin*, Solger formulated in the following manner the problem to which his main work was to respond:

How is it possible for a perfect being (*Wesen*) to reveal itself in a temporal and as such deficient appearance? [...] The solution: Through a perfect action of a certain kind which is called art; this action only exists in the moment where the idea or the essence occupies the place of reality; and thereby precisely destroys the reality for itself, the mere appearance as such.<sup>110</sup>

Like those of Schelling and of Hegel, Solger's aesthetics is a philosophy of *art*, of the production of beauty through the activity of human consciousness. Art is characterised here as a *perfect action* of which the philosophy of art has to seek the conditions of possibility. Solger's aesthetics, following the duality between self-consciousness and experience of the individual things, investigates these conditions on the one hand within consciousness, in the artistic imagination, and on the other hand, in the phenomenal characteristics of artworks. I will first analyse the "organism" of fantasy (*Phantasie*), or of the artistic imagination, which for Solger is beauty *as* activity – a key for his systematic aesthetics.<sup>111</sup>

Fantasy "is the force of the cognizing in us, which perceives idea and phenomenon as one and the same thing in the appearance itself"; essence and phenomenon are mutually saturated in it and are one and the same.<sup>112</sup> If you will, it is an "intuition" of the idea; but like all activity of finite consciousness it is impregnated with the activity of the understanding (*Verstand*) which opposes and links; it is not pure identity but reunited in itself in opposition to itself.<sup>113</sup> As the *dynamic unification of opposing directions*,

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<sup>110</sup> Solger, Lettre to his brother Friedrich, 11.07.1815, NS I, 360.

<sup>111</sup> Fantasy is "beauty itself, just as the same is real also as activity, or the creative force of the divine essence that has entered into reality" (Solger, *Erwin*, 205). It is designated by one of the characters in *Erwin* as "the key to Adelbert's entire system" (Solger, *Erwin*, 306) – Adelbert can be considered as the representative of Solger in the dialogue. See Solger, *Erwin*, third and fourth parts; *Vorlesungen*, "On the Organism of the Artistic Spirit", 183-256, M. 146-202; see too F. Decher, *Die Ästhetik K.W.F. Solgers* (see note 21), D. "Die Architektonik des künstlerischen Geistes"; and G. Pinna, "Einleitung", in Solger: *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik*, M., XXXV-XLIV.

<sup>112</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 138.

<sup>113</sup> "In this manner, there is in the essence and in the perfected itself a distinction and movement and life. If the state of cognition in fantasy is therefore to be recognized as intuition, then it is a wholly peculiar kind of intuition, in which there is alternation, relation and distinction, and which we otherwise only seek in the judgment of the understanding" (Solger, *Erwin*, 312). Cf. Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 189, M., 150.

fantasy is the subjective condition of the possibility of the appearance of the eternal in time.<sup>114</sup> An essential part of Solger's aesthetics is therefore devoted to the elucidation of the dialectical relations of the "directions of fantasy." These are the *categories* that allow Solger to work out a philosophical aesthetics based on the principles of his metaphysics, that is to say, to build a bridge between *prima philosophia* and existing works of art. In this sense, and if we set aside the important differences between both their philosophies of art, the "directions of fantasy" in Solger's aesthetics play a role comparable to that played by the "*Kunstformen*" in Hegel's aesthetics.

Solger does not define fantasy as a faculty among others, but as the transformation of our entire consciousness, when it becomes the place of the transition of the divine essence into existence.<sup>115</sup> This transition is two-fold.<sup>116</sup> 1) Artistic consciousness has to make the unity of the idea pass into relations and phenomenal oppositions in such a way that these appear as the very presence of the divine essence itself: this presentation is rendered possible by *enthusiasm* (*Begeisterung*). 2) The presentation of the idea in finitude is always at the same time the consciousness of the nullity of finitude, and therefore of the annihilation of the idea in its finite presence: it is *irony*, the other main direction of artistic consciousness.

If the idea is to become reality, then the latter has to be conceived as filled with the presence of the idea. It is what we call *artistic enthusiasm* (*künstlerische Begeisterung*). The idea itself, however, has to simultaneously pass over into the antitheses of reality, which suppress themselves against the idea. Therefore, it is connected with a cancellation (*Aufhebung*) of the idea itself, and this provides the artistic soul with the mood we call '*irony*'.<sup>117</sup>

The dialectical relationship of these two directions structures the entire field of Solgerian aesthetics; as we will see, it appears repeatedly at many different levels in artistic creation and experience. Solger defines perfected art as the "*coincidence of enthusiasm and irony*."<sup>118</sup> Art is the phenomenal presence of the essence; but without irony, artistic revelation would only have the sense of an

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<sup>114</sup> See, for example, Solger, *Erwin*, 198-199.

<sup>115</sup> See Solger, *Erwin*, 139-140.

<sup>116</sup> See Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 123-125, M., 98-99.

<sup>117</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 198, M., 157. Cf. *ibid.*, 199-200, M., 157-158.

<sup>118</sup> Solger, Letter to Tieck, 11.05.1816, NS I, 413-414, Matenko 233. Cf. J. Colette, "Enthousiasme et ironie. La dialectique artistique selon K.W.F. Solger", *Études philosophiques* 4 (1992): 487-498.

outrageous delusion pretending to exceed finitude.<sup>119</sup> Inversely, if art were only ironical, it would be trivial and would not present us with the idea at all.

Hence, the “life” of the imagination does not engender a completed fusion of the essence and existence, but only one unity of the two which is perceived (according to a Schellingian model)<sup>120</sup> either under the predominance of the essence, or under the predominance of existence, since we cannot extract ourselves from the existential separation of essence and existence:

If we first grasp the whole as idea and the activity only as its development within reality, then we have *fantasy in the narrower sense*, or the fantasy of the fantasy. – If we grasp reality as the first or as something self-sufficient and place artistic activity into it, so that it develops the life of the idea in reality and leads the former back to the latter, then we call this the *sensibility of fantasy (Sinnlichkeit der Phantasie)*, in which ordinary sensibility is not to be understood.<sup>121</sup>

Thus, fantasy in the broadest sense, through which the idea is phenomenalized in the work of art, is the unification of two directions. *Fantasy in the narrower sense* (which Solger also simply calls ‘fantasy’) is the enthusiastic consciousness of the becoming real of the idea; *sensibility of fantasy* (or “sensibility”), i.e. ironic consciousness of the fact that existence in which the idea lives is nothing in itself (and therefore reduces the idea to nothing). “Fantasy” (in the narrower sense) and “sensibility” are both broken down further in turn by Solger in two directions:

a) The ‘fantasy of fantasy’ is understood as the relation of plastic fantasy (*bildende Phantasie/ das Bilden*),<sup>122</sup> which provides a concept with an individual figure, within symbols (e.g. the gods of Greek mythology); and of meditative fantasy (*sinnende Phantasie / das Sinnen*)<sup>123</sup>, which starting, in contrast, from particular finite figures, brings them to the idea via the

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<sup>119</sup> See Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 242-243, M., 191-192; M. Boucher, *K.W.F. Solger* (see note 19), 109.

<sup>120</sup> See Schelling, *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*, §46, SW IV, 137.

<sup>121</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 187, M., 148-149.

<sup>122</sup> “Plastic fantasy is the activity through which the concept can give itself a definite shape, however, conceived as a living idea. Consequently, the concept cannot be a mere universal concept, or self-consciousness on the whole, but a concept that is already defined by properties.” (Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 191, M., 152). Cf. Solger, *Erwin*, 338.

<sup>123</sup> “Meditative fantasy consists in the grasping of the antitheses of reality and their dissolution in the idea. It begins with the particular, with the given multiplicity, yet always with relation to the concept. The particular appearance and its concept should be placed back into the idea through relation.” (Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 195, M., 155). Cf. Solger, *Erwin*, 316.

medium of allegories (e.g. Dante's *Divine Comedy*). It should be noted that the two directions start from the 'life of the idea', i.e. they always grasp phenomenal reality as already one with the idea.

b) The 'sensibility of fantasy' on the other hand, starts from what really exists, and is understood as originally opposed to the idea.<sup>124</sup> It is broken down into sensible execution (*sinnliche Ausführung*)<sup>125</sup>, in which fantasy, entirely immersed in the details of phenomenal existence, brings the latter back to its concept, but in a particular light (e.g. a sculpture of a faun or satyr, to be perceived with their details in relation to the atmosphere of Dionysian celebrations; while Apollo Belvedere would more belong to the *bildende Phantasie* because it is taken for itself as the perfection of the human body); and in *sensation* or *emotion* (*Empfindung / Rührung*)<sup>126</sup>, in which we recognise the diversity of our states of soul as the manifestation of a universal. For this side of imagination, the objects are determined only in relation with the affections they produce in us, however, this effect needs at the same time to have a more general meaning. Solger gives as an example *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. 'Sensible perfection' and 'emotion' are dialectically broken down in turn (here we have to omit the details).

It must be borne in mind that the analysis of the 'sensibility of fantasy', i.e. the description of the presence of the idea that starts from the consciousness of an irreducible and ontological *divergence* between the idea and existence, is one of the original features of Solger's aesthetics among the philosophies of the idealists of art.<sup>127</sup> In their philosophies of art, both Schelling and Hegel envisaged the unity of the idea and its sensible manifestation *starting from the idea itself*, conceived as the unity of concept and intuition, of the universal and the particular. Solger, on the other hand, does not start simply with the idea but, as we have seen, with the very *transition* between idea and reality, and proposes understanding art as a unification *into equal rights* of the essence and of existence.<sup>128</sup> With the notion of "sensibility of fantasy", Solger, while remaining in an idealistic framework, gives a place

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<sup>124</sup> See Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 202, M., 160-161.

<sup>125</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 203-204, M., 161-163; *Erwin*, 319.

<sup>126</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 210-212, M., 167; *Erwin*, 350.

<sup>127</sup> M. Ophälders therefore finds in the will to construct a "dialectics of the particular" an original feature of Solgerian metaphysics, which leads Solger to implode the framework of idealism and which also determines the crucial character of aesthetics for this enterprise (*Romantische Ironie*, e.g. 51f., 58f., 61). For a more general situating of Solger's aesthetics within German idealism see: P. Schulte, *Solgers Schönheitslehre im Zusammenhang des deutschen Idealismus: Kant, Schiller, W. von Humboldt, Schelling, Solger, Schleiermacher, Hegel*, Kassel 2001.

<sup>128</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 330.

to a kind of speculatively addressed *aisthesis*, including a perceptive and an affective side.

According to both *Erwin* and the *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik*, completed art is found in the unity of the two directions of the fantasy:

Thus, how can this separation into two be overcome, if there is not a force actively working everywhere to connect together the essence with the appearance and the appearance with the essence, its unity hovering in the course of the antithesis, and thus everywhere presently maintaining the centre of art! However, such a force [...] can only be the understanding.<sup>129</sup>

It is the activity of *artistic understanding* that allows the full co-penetration of the divine essence and temporal existence in the work of art, reuniting the direction of the fantasy and the direction of sensibility. In Sophocles or Shakespeare, for example, everything is at once entirely 'divine' and entirely human.<sup>130</sup> Giovanna Pinna insists that, with the concept of *Verstand der Phantasie*, Solger wants to emphasize the anchoring of all artistic production in rationality<sup>131</sup>, a rationality which nevertheless only finds its living content and its unity by articulating revelation (as seen above).

Thus, the unity of the work of art is not a fixed and static one. In order to describe it, Solger employs the Fichtean image of 'hovering' (*schweben*)<sup>132</sup>, or that of an elliptical movement around two poles.<sup>133</sup> The oscillation of artistic understanding aims to bring together these two indivisible aspects<sup>134</sup>: the contemplation (*Betrachtung*) that views the intimate unity of the essence and existence as a co-belonging "as though the eye of understanding here glimpses a whole world enveloped in the brilliance of the idea"<sup>135</sup>; and *Witz*, which grasps this unity as the negation of the negation, starting from the "coincidence of the antitheses in a single point."<sup>136</sup> In the last pages of *Erwin* we find the following synthetic explanation of artistic revelation:

Therefore, if the idea merges into the particular through the artistic understanding, then [...] [it] becomes the present real, and because

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<sup>129</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 360.

<sup>130</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 222, M., 176.

<sup>131</sup> G. Pinna, "Einleitung", in *Vorlesungen*, M., XLI.

<sup>132</sup> See M. Koßler, "Phantasie und Einbildungskraft. Zur Rolle der Einbildungskraft bei Fichte und Solger", *Fichte-Studien* 21 (2003): 163-181.

<sup>133</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 383.

<sup>134</sup> See Solger, *Erwin*, 371.

<sup>135</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 365. See Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 225-230, M., 179-182.

<sup>136</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 225, M., 178; see *ibid.* 232, M., 184; *ibid.* 233-234, M., 184-186, and *Erwin*, 372 for illustrations.



nothing is outside of it, the nothingness and transitory itself, and we are overcome by immeasurable grief if we see the supreme scattered away into nothingness by its necessary earthly being. And yet we cannot put the blame on anything else than perfection itself in its revelation for temporal cognition. [...] Now this moment of transition, in which the idea itself necessarily becomes shattered, must be the true seat of art, and in this moment *Witz* and contemplation [...] must be one and the same. Hence, here the spirit of the artist has to gather together all the directions into a single all-encompassing view, and we give the name 'irony' to this view that hovers over and annihilates everything.<sup>137</sup>

Here it concerns *irony in the broad sense*, which is the unity of irony in the restricted sense and of enthusiasm. Irony is "the absolute act"<sup>138</sup> of the artistic understanding, bringing together in a single experience the two directions of the revelation of the idea in existence. Solgerian irony, like the irony of Friedrich Schlegel, is therefore far from reducing itself to a figure of style or only being a state of mind in which the stakes would be solely aesthetic. It is an activity of consciousness capable of concretely resolving – due to its correlation with a finite individual thing (the work of art) – the metaphysical problem of the *Darstellung* of the absolute.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 387. "Artistic irony is the name we give to this centre of art in which the perfect unity of contemplation and *Witz* comes about, insofar as it consists in the canceling of the idea through itself. It constitutes the essence of art and its inner significance; for it is the disposition of the soul [*Gemüt*], in which we recognize that our reality would not be if it were not a revelation of the idea, and that precisely with this reality even the idea becomes something null and perishes. Certainly, reality necessarily belongs to the existence of the idea; however, it is always simultaneously connected with its cancellation" (Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 241-242, M., 191).

<sup>138</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 189, M., 150.

<sup>139</sup> Regarding irony in Solger, see especially: K. Nishimura, "Die Struktur des ästhetischen Bewußtseins bei K.W.F. Solger. Die Bedeutung der dialektischen Ironie", *Perspektiven der Philosophie* 6 (1980): 29-45; R. Malter, "L'ironie comme véritable essence de l'art et explication "théorique" par Solger de la façon romantique d'appréhender le monde dans le dialogue *Erwin*", *Études philosophiques* 2 (1983): 163-176; V. Verra, "Tragische und künstlerische Ironie bei K.W.F. Solger", in *Philosophie und Poesie. Festschrift für Otto Pöggeler*, ed. A. Gethmann-Siefert (Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt, 1988), vol. I, 235-254; G. Pinna, *L'ironia metafisica. Filosofia e teoria estetica in K. W. F. Solger* (Genoa, 1994); F. Decher, *Die Ästhetik K.W.F. Solgers* (see note 22), 308-329; W. Henckmann, "Le concept d'ironie chez Solger", in *L'Esthétique de Karl Solger* (see note 23), 25-47; M. Ophälders, *Romantische Ironie*, 2004; Ph. Grosos, *L'Ironie du réel à la lumière du romantisme allemand* (see note 23), 115-137; W. Henckmann, "Ironie in der frührezeption Solgers", in *Grundzüge der Philosophie K.W.F. Solgers* (see note 21), 101-155. Cf. *The Critical Mythology of Irony* by Joseph A. Dane (The University of Georgia Press, 1991).

Solger formulates this romantic and idealistic problem in terms of temporality.<sup>140</sup> The “ellipse” that the artistic understanding describes around the two “foci” of *contemplation* and *Witz* expresses “an entirely real being, yet one that eternally returns back into itself.”<sup>141</sup> In this “miraculous” becoming, which is no longer a temporal becoming but eternal, and which, however, is phenomenalized and therefore enters into time,<sup>142</sup> existence and the essence are perfectly (dynamically) united. In other words: aesthetic experience is at once outside of time and inside of time. Solger speaks of the *instant* to designate this singular temporality and employs the Boehmian, Leibnizian and Schellingian image of lightning and flashes:

For in the same original unity, here essence and temporality interpenetrate one another, and the one cannot lose itself through the other, without the latter gaining itself through the former. However, both interpenetrate each other by means of the effectiveness of the artistic understanding that constantly unites with itself, yet flashes between the two.<sup>143</sup>

Such a flash, though, takes place only in the interaction between the activity of a conscience, and the objectivity of an artwork, in the “moment in which the activity of the idea concludes in a specific fact.”<sup>144</sup>

### c) Artistic realizations: symbol and allegory

By constructing the “organism” of fantasy, Solger systematically draws attention to the subjective conditions of the possibility of aesthetic creation and aesthetic experience. Yet precisely because of the very content that is revealed, the unity of the subjective and the objective, we cannot simply understand the subjective activity and its concrete presentation in works of art as opposites facing each other. Solger seeks to understand these works not as a simple vestige of the activity of consciousness, but clearly as its *effective presentation*. The idea that artworks are “living” objects is not simply a

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<sup>140</sup> For a more detailed comparative study on this point, see Mildred Galland-Szymkowiak, “Symbol und Zeitlichkeit bei Schelling, Solger und Hegel”, *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 2007/2: 324-354.

<sup>141</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 383.

<sup>142</sup> “[...] a becoming, however, which is not temporal in this perfect understanding, but an eternal and unconditioned becoming, and yet has to be a phenomenal essence. Nevertheless, oh most precious teacher Adelbert, this is clearly the genuine miracle of art” (Solger, *Erwin*, 382).

<sup>143</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 389.

<sup>144</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 121, M., 97.

metaphor; for Solger it is what defines them and what philosophy has to rigorously elucidate:

There is immediate life and activity [...] in the work of art. It is not a result, but the organ of activity, the activity itself as a real fact.<sup>145</sup>

The whole problem of the systematic analysis of artistic productions therefore consists in elaborating categories that could demonstrate *the internal identity of the works with the activity that constitutes them*. It is in this sense that we have to understand the definitions of the symbol and the allegory.<sup>146</sup> To approach these concepts in semiotic terms, starting from the notion of sign (as T. Todorov did<sup>147</sup>), is to start from a set of questions foreign to the one within which Solger constructed the concepts of symbol and allegory.

The beautiful is defined as “the finitude of the idea, the fact that encloses it”, which determines the symbol in the broadest sense of the word; “in this sense all art is symbolic”.<sup>148</sup> Like Goethe<sup>149</sup> and like Schelling<sup>150</sup>, Solger defines the symbol as the perfect unity of the idea and its phenomenal manifestation, of ‘signification’ and ‘being’. Unlike Friedrich Schlegel, he does not define the symbolism as a signification or an allusion to the absolute, but as the *presence (Gegenwart)* of the idea, a presence of which he stresses the fullness. The idea “becomes the present real”<sup>151</sup>; the symbol is “the existence of the idea itself”<sup>152</sup> and not its sign.

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<sup>145</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 121, M., 98.

<sup>146</sup> See especially W. Henckmann’s two articles on this topic: “Symbol und Allegorie bei Solger”, in *Romantik in Deutschland. Ein interdisziplinäres Symposium*, ed. R. Brinkmann, (Stuttgart, 1978): 639-651; “Symbolische und allegorische Kunst bei Solger”, in *Früher Idealismus und Frühromantik. Der Streit um die Grundlagen der Ästhetik (1795-1805)*, eds. W. Jaeschke/H. Holzey (Hamburg, 1990), 214-240; G. Pinna, *L’ironia metafisica. Filosofia e teoria estetica in K.W.F. Solger* (Genova, 1994), 91-105; M. Galland-Szymkowiak, “Le symbole chez Solger, ou l’existence de l’idée”, in *L’Esthétique de Karl Solger* (see note 23), 67-97.

<sup>147</sup> T. Todorov, *Théories du symbole* (Paris, 1983).

<sup>148</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 123, M., 99.

<sup>149</sup> See, for instance, Goethe’s letter to Meyer, 13.03.1791 (in *Goethes Briefe* in 50 Bänden, Weimar, 1887-1912, vol. 9, 251; also the essay “Über die Gegenstände der bildenden Kunst”, in J.W. Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens* (Munich, 1985f.), vol. 6.2).

<sup>150</sup> See Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, SW V, 411-412.

<sup>151</sup> See Solger, *Erwin*, 387.

<sup>152</sup> “The symbol is the existence of the idea itself; it really is what it *signifies*, it is the idea in its immediate reality. Thus, the symbol is always itself true, and never a mere reflection of something true.” (Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 129, M., 103).

The symbol is neither an arbitrary sign, nor an imitation of a model of which it would itself be different, but the true revelation of the idea.<sup>153</sup>

Now, revelation is only there for a consciousness. The necessary vector of the revelation of the idea is the *individual* activity of artistic imagination – by accentuating this point Solger stresses an important difference between his philosophy of art, and those of Schelling and of Hegel. Hence the following definition plays a crucial role in *Erwin*:

The symbol therefore [...] would be in our opinion a thing of fantasy, which precisely as such would be the existence [*Daseyn*] of the idea itself.<sup>154</sup>

This is why the symbol “cannot simply appear as the finished product of forces, but also as the life and the effect of the forces themselves.”<sup>155</sup> The ‘forces’ denote the activity of artistic consciousness – of which we have seen that it culminates and is summarized in irony. It is therefore *irony that nourishes the symbol from the inside* and gives it ‘life’; it is the movement of the self-differentiation and self-reunification of the symbol (in the broad sense) in the symbol (in the narrow sense) and allegory.<sup>156</sup>

Therefore the symbol in general – or the beautiful – “never appears without this division into symbol and allegory.”<sup>157</sup> Here we are dealing with a dialectical pair in which neither of the two members could be entire and complete without the other,<sup>158</sup> and “superior art” cannot reduce itself to the one or the other, but consists in the interpenetration of the symbolic and the allegoric.<sup>159</sup> The symbol in the broad sense, thing *and* activity, in fact consists in the dialectical relation between the *matter* of art and the *activity* that makes the idea enter into this matter:

In the symbol [= *symbol in general*], when we consider it from the sides of activity, we recognize: 1) the entire effectiveness as exhausted within it, consequently itself as the object or substance [*Stoff*] in which it nevertheless is still perceived as effectiveness. This is the *symbol* in the narrower sense. We recognize 2) the beautiful as substance still caught

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<sup>153</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 219.

<sup>154</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 218. See too *Erwin*, 223.

<sup>155</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 223.

<sup>156</sup> Regarding this terminology, see Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 123 (M. 99), 129 (M. 103-104).

<sup>157</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 323. Cf. Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 135, M., 108.

<sup>158</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 145, M., 115-116.

<sup>159</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 143, M., 114.

up in the activity, as an aspect of the activity, which still draws itself towards two sides. This is the *allegory*.<sup>160</sup>

The individual phenomenon saturated by the idea is *symbolic* in the narrower sense. Because of this fact, here the symbolized idea is not the idea in its pure universality, but an idea immediately particularized. The hallmark of the symbol is therefore the fusion of the universal with “its” particular; it is

the idea in its full reality, in which it does not only appear as a complete and everywhere determined presence, but is also established in this presence through its own perfection without need and striving.<sup>161</sup>

In the *allegory*, it is certainly always the unity of the essence and phenomenal existence that appears (this is why the allegory is one of the two aspects of the symbolic ‘in general’): but this time the unity is emphasized *starting from the mutual negation* of the essence and existence. The starting point is no longer, like for the symbol, the self-configuration of the idea in existing reality, but the opposition of the idea and the real (an opposition that is as original as their unity). Their unity in the allegory therefore appears not as a fusion, but rather as *an entering into relation*.

The allegory contains the same as the symbol; only that we therein preferably intuit the working of the idea that has perfected itself in the symbol. [...] Here reality is much more recognized as a product of relations whose activity is therein simultaneously intuited [...].<sup>162</sup>

#### d) The epochs of art

Solger doubles his theoretical aesthetics – polarised at every level by the dialectical movement of revelation – with a philosophical history of art organised in the same way. Symbol and allegory respectively typify ancient and Christian art, or more accurately the “worlds” of artistic representations that characterize ancient Greek polytheism and Christianity. Solger takes up the division into two epochs of the history which was a legacy of the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns re-interpreted in Schiller (in the pair: naïve/sentimental), in the Schlegel brothers (in the objective/subjective, antique/romantic distinction) and, differently, in Schelling (antique/modern). In Solger’s systematic aesthetics this “epochal” history is meant to

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<sup>160</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 129, M., 104.

<sup>161</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 225.

<sup>162</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 131, M., 105.

illustrate the categories (symbolism and allegory) that are deduced from the productive activity of artistic consciousness.<sup>163</sup>

The symbol, “the highest perfection of existence [*Daseyn*]”<sup>164</sup>, presents an existing individual saturated by the divine unity. The enclosure on itself, the self-completion of phenomenal existence should incarnate the unity of the essence, which is realized in the first place in the double world of Greek mythology, the world of *gods* and of *heroes*. On the side of the idea that enters into existence, the god in fact presents the essence of the symbol in an individual living person, i.e. the “intimate and indivisible fusion of the universal and the particular.”<sup>165</sup> On the side of existence filled by the essence, the same unity is illustrated in the hero.<sup>166</sup> However, we have seen that “even the symbol can never entirely leave the allegory.”<sup>167</sup> “All the relations uniting the symbol to the divine are allegorical.”<sup>168</sup> Thus, the symbol is not the pure identity devoid of difference, where “reality and the idea would mutually cancel one another.”<sup>169</sup> It has to be noted that the gods in Greek mythology are not symbolic without their relationship to *Necessity*, the obscure principle of absolute unity, or to the *Chaos* of the theogonies, which imposes its law on the gods and radiates through them – a relationship Schelling too had stressed in his lectures on the philosophy of art.

For Solger, the allegory is “the supreme vitality of the idea”<sup>170</sup>: based on the opposition between the essence and existence it exhibits the unity of the idea *as a relation*. “The essence of the allegory [...] lies in the mere relation.”<sup>171</sup> It shows us the presence of the divine through its relation to the finite as such. It is especially illustrated in the world of representations produced by Christianity. The Christian allegory creates a relationship, that is to say, it reunites *and* opposes the divinity and finite existence, which in Greek mythology appeared as the two aspects of one and the same unity. However, through this relationship, allegory makes the extreme terms enter into the life of the idea that were left to the confines of the mythological world: the absolute unity of *Necessity* on the one side, and everyday infra-

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<sup>163</sup> “The ancient and Christian arts represent most perfectly both standpoints, that of the symbol and the allegory. Yet they are historical appearances, whereas the opposition of the symbol and allegory arises entirely naturally from the idea of art in general.” (Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 156, M., 124).

<sup>164</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 225.

<sup>165</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 227. Cf. Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, §30, SW V, 391-392.

<sup>166</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 235.

<sup>167</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 142, M., 113.

<sup>168</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 141, M., 112-113.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, M., 113.

<sup>170</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 133, M., 106.

<sup>171</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 132, M., 105.

heroic existence on the other. The Christian mythology develops in an *explicit* manner the dialectical relation between the divine essence and finite existence, a relation that was only latent in ancient symbolism. Solger explains this idea in *Erwin*'s poetic style:

Then what else do you glimpse in the mediator and redeemer than that vital force and activity of God, in a real and mortal shape, which as the Godhead even embraces the already lost and fallen temporal being with immeasurable, gracious love, in order to lead it back again into its lap of blessedness, and which, however, as a man liberates, through faith – which is a yearning that is transparent to itself and sure of its goal – and through temporal annihilation, not only itself but the whole of humanity from the power of the world, and is elevated to his eternal home! Is not here always the one in the other, and refers to the same?<sup>172</sup>

The Christian allegory needs a *symbolic centre*: the Man-God, the existing individual who *is* the divine itself. In line with its etymology, to which Solger makes an allusion at the end of this passage, the allegory indicates something *other* than itself – however not by *signifying*, but in an organic development based on the symbolic unity that appears as the hidden core of the allegory:

To be sure, the real allegorical work always says more than what is found in its limited presence, however, it still does not say anything else than what it bears in itself and livingly develops out of itself.<sup>173</sup>

Thus, Solger is indeed offering a rehabilitation of the allegory, by showing that it too is thoroughly indispensable for great art, just as the symbol is in Goethe's sense, and by basing his study of Christian artworks on the concept of allegory: among others, the paintings of Leonardo Da Vinci, Corregio, Raphael, Titian, the poetry and literature of Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Calderon, Goethe, Tieck, Jean Paul.

The Solgerian conception of the symbol (doubled into symbol and allegory) therefore appears as an attempt at synthesizing the two major tendencies in the conceptions of the symbol of that epoch<sup>174</sup>: on the one side, the symbol in Goethe's sense (and in Schelling's), the perfect fusion of the

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<sup>172</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 229-230; cf. *Vorlesungen*, 144, M. 115.

<sup>173</sup> Solger, *Erwin*, 226. K. Wheeler in her anthology *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: the Romantic Ironists and Goethe* (Cambridge/London: 1984, chapters 4 and 5 on Solger) notes that Solger "is distinguishing allegory from symbol in a way quite different from that familiar to English readers. That is, he defines 'allegory' differently from, say, Coleridge [...] the distinction might be better understood by English readers as between 'allegorical symbol' and 'plastic (tending to concrete) symbol'." (*ibid.*, 241, note 3).

<sup>174</sup> Bengt Algot Sørensen, *Symbol und Symbolismus in den ästhetischen Theorien des 18. Jahrhunderts und der deutschen Romantik* (Copenhagen, 1963), 277-286.

universal and the particular, which emphasizes the immanence of the idea in the sensible world<sup>175</sup>; and on the other side, the “allegory of the infinite” in the sense of Friedrich Schlegel, presenting reflectively the infinite *as* unrepresentable.

### e) System of the arts

Based on his conception of art as the unity of the essence and existence manifested within existence itself, Solger also deduces a system of the arts: he determines the essence and the mutual relations of the arts using the principle of the revelation of the idea.<sup>176</sup> According to him, the classification of the arts following the material utilized by each one does not take into account the fact that art is precisely *not* the reunion of an idea and a matter existing independently of each other, but immediately an intimate unity of the idea and its existence. Thus, the principle of the classification of the arts must be sought in the relation of the idea to the oppositions of the existence in which it reveals itself. Solger is aware of the innovative character of this systematic undertaking<sup>177</sup>, for which he uses an additional dialectical pair – *Kunst* (art) und *Poesie* (poesy).

In *art in the broad sense*, the relation of the idea to phenomenal reality can assume two configurations – still according to the schema that we have seen at work in the analysis of the fantasy and the symbolic and allegorical “worlds of art.”

1) Viewed from the side of the idea, revelation is the advent of a unity that cancels the diverse and dominates it. According to Solger, this is the essence of *poesy*, whose material – language – is not a reality facing thought, but indeed the objective side of thought itself.<sup>178</sup> Poesy is art par excellence, the most universal art.

2) Viewed from the side of existence, the revelation of the idea is the unity of the universal and the particular, but at the heart of the irreducible oppositions of finite existence: it is *art in the narrow sense* (the fine or plastic

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<sup>175</sup> See Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 134, M., 107-108.

<sup>176</sup> See Solger, *Erwin*, 239-282; *Vorlesungen*, part three. For a detailed study, cf. F. Decher, *Die Ästhetik K.W.F. Solgers* (see note 22), 330-370.

<sup>177</sup> “[...] the classification of art has never been so completely established, and it has especially never been proved in this way why there cannot be more than five arts” (Letter regarding *Erwin*, from Solger to his brother, 11.07.1815, in NS I, 360-361). It is only in the *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* that a complete system of fine arts is presented. In *Erwin*, the pair symbol/allegory is not applied in a strictly systematic manner to the determinations of the relations between the arts (see W. Henckmann, “Symbol und Allegorie bei K.W.F. Solger”, 645; also, Solger, *Erwin*, 264, 266).

<sup>178</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 259, M., 204 ; *Erwin*, 241-259 on poesy.



arts). “Here the universal will never be found without the particular; however, the concept and particular matter stand in diverse relationships with one another.”<sup>179</sup> In its relation to finite reality, the idea either presents itself symbolically or allegorically. *Sculpture* is symbolic art<sup>180</sup>, the expression of a concept in a finite individual. *Painting*, in contrast, is allegorical, because its objects are not immediately identical with the concept, but are linked to it by the intermediary of light.<sup>181</sup> Whether the relation of the concept to the phenomenon is mediate (painting) or immediate (sculpture), it is still always the work of the “living effectiveness of artistic consciousness.”<sup>182</sup> It is this very activity of linking that becomes the centre in *music* and in *architecture*.<sup>183</sup> In fact, only the activity of consciousness confers to the pure corporality of the architectural edifice its unity with thought, and brings an anchor in objectivity to the perfect spiritual fugacity of music.<sup>184</sup>

*Erwin* (1815) was the first published post-Kantian idealistic-systematic aesthetics: Hegel’s compilation by Hotho appeared in 1835-1838, Schelling’s *Lectures* were published posthumously in 1859 – student notebooks were circulating, though, from 1820 onwards in the first case, around 1802-05 in the second one. In the long German 19<sup>th</sup> century, Solger was considered one of the three major idealist thinkers in philosophical aesthetics<sup>185</sup>, if not as the founder of aesthetics understood as a speculative science.<sup>186</sup> However, it should be pointed out that Solger’s aesthetics not only meets a requirement for systematicity (through the permanent dialectical oscillation between the symbolic and the allegorical), but is also committed – more than those of Schelling or Hegel – to describing the living encounter with the works of literature and fine arts.<sup>187</sup>

#### 4. History and Philosophy of Mythology

Solger’s interest in mythology largely exceeded the framework of the philosophy of art: classical philology and mythological studies represented an

<sup>179</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 260, M., 205.

<sup>180</sup> Solger, *ibid.*, M., 206, and *Erwin*, 259-266 on sculpture and painting.

<sup>181</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 261, M., 206-207.

<sup>182</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 262, M., 207.

<sup>183</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 262-266, M., 207ff.; *Erwin*, 269-277.

<sup>184</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 266, M., 208-209.

<sup>185</sup> See R. Zimmermann, *Geschichte der Aesthetik als philosophischer Wissenschaft*, Wien 1858, IV, chapter 2; H. Lotze, *Geschichte der Aesthetik in Deutschland* (Munich, 1868), I, chapter 6 (and II, ch. 4; II, ch. 6; III, ch. 1).

<sup>186</sup> This was the case with Chr. H. Weiße and Fr. Th. Vischer, as W. Henckmann recalls (“Symbol und Allegorie bei K.W.F. Solger” [see note 143], 648).

<sup>187</sup> See G. Pinna, “Einleitung”, in : Solger, *Vorlesungen*, M., XVI-XVII.

essential part of his education and his work. Due to his contact with Friedrich August Wolf, under whom he studied classical philology at Halle<sup>188</sup>, with Johann Heinrich Voß the younger, as well as Wilhelm von Humboldt, and due to his readings (Georg Friedrich Creuzer, Martin Gottfried Hermann and Christian Gottlob Heyne) and his involvement in the debates of the epoch, he has to be characterized as “one of the leading philologists of his time.”<sup>189</sup> He translated Sophocles and Pindar<sup>190</sup>, and in both Frankfurt-an-der-Oder and Berlin he gave courses on classical Greek and Latin and on mythology.<sup>191</sup> Above all, Solger envisioned the project of presenting in five or six books his *Ideas on the Religion of the Greeks and a Number of Other Peoples in Antiquity*, of which he seems to have had a rather precise idea as early as 1810.<sup>192</sup> Toward this end he collected notes on Pausanias, Herodotus, Homer, Hesiod, Apollodorus etc., without however accomplishing the project before his death.

It is therefore problematic for a complete understanding of his thought that researchers have neglected this entire facet of his work.<sup>193</sup> We possess a compilation made by Karl Otfried Müller using his own lecture notes (taken in Berlin in 1816-1817) and Solger’s papers<sup>194</sup>; in addition there exist several texts of Solger.<sup>195</sup> An important exchange of letters with Friedrich von der

<sup>188</sup> W. Henckmann, “*Etwas über das Verhältnis...*”, 420.

<sup>189</sup> W. Henckmann, “*Etwas über das Verhältnis...*”, 413; cf. 421.

<sup>190</sup> Solger regularly collaborated on the review *Pantheon. Ein Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Kunst* (eds. J.G. Büsching and K.L. Kannegießer) with translations of Pindar’s hymns.

<sup>191</sup> For a list of the courses given by Solger, cf. H. Fricke, *Karl W.F. Solger. Ein brandenburgisch-berlinisches Gelehrtenleben an der Wende von 18. zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1972), 261-262.

<sup>192</sup> So much so that he had a discussion about this project with the publisher G.A. Reimer. Cf. W. Henckmann, “*Etwas über das Verhältnis...*”, 422. Solger describes his project for the book in a letter to K. L. Krause from January 1810 (NS I, 187-188).

<sup>193</sup> See W. Henckmann, “*Etwas über das Verhältnis...*”, 411-413. Notwithstanding, one must cite: G. Pinna, “Alle origini degli studi mitologici di K. O. Müller: Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger”, *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, 14.3 (1984): 1021-1029; G. Arrigoni, “Il maestro del maestro e i loro continuatori: mitologia e simbolismo animale in Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger, Karl Otfried Müller e dopo”, *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore*, 14.3 (1984): 937-1019; A. Baillot, “Aktualität des Sophokles. Zur Übersetzung und Inszenierung der *Antigone*: ein unveröffentlicher Brief von Rudolf Abeken an Karl Solger (Weimar, 1809)”, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 120 (2001): 161-182; W. Jaeschke, “‘Unsere heutigen Mythologen’, oder: Über die Unbequemlichkeit des Denkens”, in: A. Baillot, M. Galland-Szymkowiak (eds.), *Grundzüge der Philosophie K.W.F. Solgers* (Zurich, 2014), 207-223.

<sup>194</sup> *Solgers mythologische Ansichten, aus seinen Papieren zusammengestellt von K.O. Müller*, NS II, 676-717.

<sup>195</sup> *Über die älteste Ansicht der Griechen von der Gestalt der Welt* (NS II, 629-649); *Über den Ursprung der Lehre von Dämonen und Schutzgeistern in der Religion der alten Griechen* (NS II, 650-675); *Ideen über die Religion der Griechen und einiger andern Völker des Alterthums* (NS II, 719-761).

Hagen in September 1819 concerns the edition and translation of the *Song of the Nibelungs* provided by Hagen. In what follows, we will use some of the manuscript notes of a student that relate to a course held in 1818 by Solger on the *Mythology of the Greeks*, conserved in the *Joseph Regenstein Library* at the University of Chicago (Illinois) and unpublished up to now. They were transcribed by Anne Baillot.<sup>196</sup>

### a) Mythology and revelation

How are we to understand the link between Solger's studies on mythology and his philosophical thought of 'revelation'? In the *Letters Concerning the Misunderstandings of Philosophy and of Its Relation to Religion*, Solger writes that the contents of philosophy and religion are ultimately one and the same: religious consciousness is the experience of revelation, while the task of philosophy is to dialectically elucidate it.<sup>197</sup> But we have seen that this 'revelation' is essentially conceived on the kenotic model originating from Christianity. Could the affirmation of the unity of the content of religion and philosophy really be valid for all the religions, if the speculative content at stake is shaped from the Christian paradigm? And if "Christ is the turning point of history"<sup>198</sup>, the point in time that gives a sense to a before and an after, does this imply that Solger interprets other religions only in terms of their value in relation to Christianity?

It is clear that Solger's goal is not to make a theological apology of the Christian religion as it historically exists, nor to teleologically interpret the other religions with regard to Christianity. Rather, it is a matter of asking if his *philosophical* system, whose centre is the thought of revelation, permits us to understand all the forms of human relationship to the 'divine essence', and this includes the testimony of the religions of antiquity: especially Greek antiquity, but Solger also underlines that it is worth studying, for example, Indian mythology, though he distances himself from F. Schlegel.<sup>199</sup> Let us also recall that the philosophical category of 'revelation' does not, strictly

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<sup>196</sup> *Mythologie der Griechen* by K.W.F. Solger. Lecture Notes (unknown hand), April 1818, part of the Berlin Collection of the Joseph Regenstein Library (ms 106), University of Chicago, Illinois. Thank you to the Special Collections Research Center of Joseph Regenstein Library for allowing me use this material, and to Anne Baillot for sending to me her transcription of the manuscript.

<sup>197</sup> See *Briefe, die Mißverständnisse über Philosophie und deren Verhältniß zur Religion betreffend*, 51-53; UWB, NS II, 157-158, 178; as well as the whole of chapter 12 of UWB.

<sup>198</sup> "Christ is the turning point of history. What preceded him, refers to him; what succeeds him, flows from out of him" (Letter of Solger to Abeken, 23.01.1818, NS I, 604).

<sup>199</sup> Solger, Letter to Friedrich von der Hagen, 19.09.1819, NS I, 757.

speaking, coincide with the Christian thought of Revelation, but draws critically on it.<sup>200</sup>

Solger specifies this: under ‘mythology’, he does not understand the simple study of myths themselves, but rather a history *and* a philosophy of religions, one able to describe from the inside the relationship of consciousness to the divinity.

I will not simply discuss mythology in the narrow sense, excluding religion and only mentioning the sagas, but I will include everything that belongs to the view of the religious world of the Greeks. The aim is to grasp the mysteries, the divine services, etc. in their spirit and significance.<sup>201</sup>

The question of the meaning of Greek religion and its relation to the metaphysical paradigm of ‘revelation’ therefore does not receive a response deduced *a priori* from a system that is outside of the historical and cultural data. The hermeneutical questioning must start from historical *facts* – therefore from ancient texts that describe myths and religious practices.

Thus, here we have to correctly find the complete facts for our goal [...].<sup>202</sup>

We do not mention the abstract aspect of religion, universal moral concepts, but we will only lay out the facts themselves.<sup>203</sup>

In his research on mythology, Solger always prefers a close reading of the texts. He above all recommended philological rigor to Friedrich von der Hagen who edited the *Nibelungenlied*.<sup>204</sup> He considered this accuracy as a major quality and recognized it, for instance, in Georg Friedrich Creuzer.<sup>205</sup> At the same time, he took care to situate the data relating to mythology and the history of religion in their entire cultural context, in order to stay as close as possible to the meaning that the text or religious practices had for the Greeks.<sup>206</sup> According to Solger, this rigor in *historical* study is not in

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<sup>200</sup> See Part One of this article, the section: “The Unity of Revelation and Speculation.”

<sup>201</sup> Solger, *Mythologie der Griechen*, 1 verso.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 recto.

<sup>204</sup> Solger, Letter to Hagen, 11.09.1819, NS I, 748.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 745.

<sup>206</sup> Solger, *Ideen über die Religion der Griechen und einiger andern Völker des Alterthums*, NS II, 720-721. See also the letter to K.L. Krause of January 1810: “There should not be a history where there is none possible, i.e. where the historical data is not complete enough, but using the data there should be a study of the spirit, as profound as possible. [...] Of course, all this

contradiction with the understanding of philological data based on a *genuine unifying principle*, which is indeed philosophical. Solger designated his approach to mythology as a philosophical one:

The goal is at once a philosophical one, and even something prevailing, although the philosophical can only be found along historical paths and cannot be founded on suppositions.<sup>207</sup>

It is this specificity of Solger's methodology that ought to distinguish him from other contemporary approaches. In his view, a philosophical understanding of Greek religion cannot consist in an arbitrary application of philosophical motifs (or "*philosopheme*") that would be external to religious facts – be it a 'physical' explanation relating the myths to natural phenomena or general abstract ideas belonging to ethics or a 'rational religion'.<sup>208</sup> Solger is opposed to theories which arbitrarily associate 'empty abstractions' (the good, evil, the divinity...) and sensible images or events (the course of the stars, seasons....) in order to explain the content of mythology; in this case, he argues, the latter are erroneously termed 'symbols'.

The connection, however, between these symbols and religious ideas is not at all touched upon, but is boldly, we could almost say, insolently presupposed.<sup>209</sup>

Like Moritz<sup>210</sup> and Schelling<sup>211</sup>, Solger contends that myths (and religious symbols) should be explained by means of themselves. This immanent explication points to what they are: an expression of the link between finite consciousness and the divine essence, of the manner in which consciousness

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will not be a collection of antique notes, but always only instructs in what belongs to the thing and makes sense. Thus, it can become a work that not only discusses antiquity, but one that also contains something of the manner and being of antiquity." (NS I, 188).

<sup>207</sup> Solger, *Mythologie der Griechen*, 1 verso.

<sup>208</sup> Solger, Letter to Hagen, 11.09.1819, NS I, 745-746. Solger here takes a stand on an issue that was very topical at this time. The statement that it is possible to see in every mythological figure a "philosophem", i.e. to understand it as the cover of a rational core meaning, was at the centre of the controversy between Gottfried Hermann (1772-1848), who advocated such an approach, and Friedrich Creuzer (1771-1858). On Solger's critical position regarding the *Mythologen*, see UWB p. 185, 193, and my commentaries in the French translation, Solger, *Écrits philosophiques*.

<sup>209</sup> Solger, Letter to Hagen, 11.09.1819, NS I, 747.

<sup>210</sup> See the introduction to the *Götterlehre*, which establishes the principle, adopted by Schelling, of a "tautegorical" understanding of myths. (K. Ph. Moritz, *Schriften zur Aesthetik und Poetik*, ed. H.-G. Schrimpf, Tübingen 1962, 196). Solger mentions Moritz's *Götterlehre* in the unpublished course of 1818 (*Mythologie der Griechen*, 14 recto).

<sup>211</sup> See Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, SW V, 401, 409, 411.

sees how the divine is related to the world.<sup>212</sup> Solger interprets religions as “systems” in an organic sense: along with the totality of its productions and manifestations, religion is a coherent whole that is deployed in an immanent manner according to a single principle of life which the ‘mythologist’ ought to identify. Based on this, he has to explain the different expressions or forms of religious life – just as the botanist discerns a single ‘system’ in the constitution of plants, a system which he has to study in all its nuances and modifications.<sup>213</sup> This single philosophical principle is indeed ‘revelation’:

The inner unity [...], which lies [in the various mythologies], and the star that has to illuminate to us the development and history of this unity in its phenomenal appearance in humankind, is alone that of *revelation*; without this the entirety of world history would be incomprehensible, not to mention the religious ideas that have sprung from this history.<sup>214</sup>

The *spirit* of religion, i.e. the sense it has for human consciousness,

solely and simply consists in the ideas of the presence and the revelation of God, in both the creation and consciousness of man, of the relationship of the world and man to God, and finally of the redemption.<sup>215</sup>

But how can we pass from the principle (revelation) to the concrete interpretation of religious facts?

## b) Myth and mysticism

‘Revelation’ consists of a double dialectical movement. The idea configures itself in a finite form, and manifests itself in the particularity of existence. There is no ‘being’ in existence except through this self-manifestation of the idea. Within faith, consciousness grasps itself as nothing vis-à-vis this self-

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<sup>212</sup> This would be close to the position adopted by Schelling in his *Philosophy of Mythology* from the 1820s to the 1840s. Schelling takes up the hypothesis of Creuzer, who raised it “to the level of unquestionable historical self-evidence”: the signification of mythology is religious. Theories that conceive of mythology as the disguise, conscious or unconscious, of theoretical or ethical ‘philosophems’ do not explain the mythological phenomenon better than those which see it as a purely poetical invention. Mythological representations immediately express a relationship between consciousness and the divine (Schelling, *Einleitung zur Philosophie der Mythologie*, I-IV, SW XI, 3-93).

<sup>213</sup> Solger, Letter to Hagen, 19.09.1819, NS I, 753.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 752. Solger is aware of the originality of his position: “Yes, I want to do much more than Kanne and all of his ilk, I want to relate it to revelation, and this is why I harbor all the more aversion, that the former start from wholly false points of view and go down erroneous paths.” (*ibid.*).

<sup>215</sup> Solger, Letter to Hagen, 19.09.1819, NS I, 754-755.

manifestation; in this way, it becomes the very place of the revelation of the idea, which annihilates itself in consciousness. With the help of the pair – *mythology in the narrow sense* and *mysticism* – Solger seeks to trace all the manifestations of the ancient Greek religion back to this double dialectical movement of revelation (self-manifestation and self-destruction).

Through myth, the Godhead enters into human knowledge, through mysticism our knowledge returns back to the divine and dissolves itself there. In the mystery, it is rather the allegorical principle, reality is given. We give ourselves over to higher knowledge; and this shift to a higher knowledge is called ‘allegory’.<sup>216</sup>

The *myth* belongs on the side of the symbol; it illustrates the individualization of the divine, its ‘descent’. On the other hand, in the *mystical* attitude consciousness no longer grasps the divine as something existing, but relates to it as a principle in an allegorical manner.

Each of the two directions is doubled again: the myth contains the symbolic (the form, the configuration of the legend) and the allegorical (the relation of consciousness to the meaning of this legend); in the same way, the mystery contains an allegorical dimension (the pure knowledge of the divine) *and* a symbolic dimension (the aspect of religious *feeling*, of an immediate individual experience of the divine).<sup>217</sup> The deployment here of the symbol/allegory pair is in coherence with its utilization in the philosophy of art.<sup>218</sup> However, Solger is not at all interested in interpreting religion by means of art – for which he criticized J. H. Voß.<sup>219</sup> The 1818 course suggests that religion, from the point of view of revelation, is more original than art.<sup>220</sup>

For individual consciousness, religious experience and artistic experience share in common a *temporal* character: they are moments of the fullness of the idea, captured in art as a phenomenon, in religion as an inner experience, but always in an evanescence symptomatic of the irreconcilable tension between the absolute unity of the idea and the infinite dispersion of existence – and yet both are reconciled, but only in an instant. It is precisely the task of philosophy to guarantee, through the patient weaving of dialectical thought, the preservation of these favoured moments.

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<sup>216</sup> Solger, *Mythologie der Griechen*, 5 verso.

<sup>217</sup> Solger, *Mythologie der Griechen*, 5 recto and verso.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. also Solger’s letter to Tieck, 22.11.1818, NS I, 688-689, Matenko 485-486.

<sup>219</sup> Solger, *Mythologie der Griechen*, 3 recto-4 verso.

<sup>220</sup> “(...) art is also only the cloak of religion” (*ibid.*, 2 verso); and contra Voß: “then what is art if it is not related to religion” (*ibid.*, 4 verso).

But should such a perpetuation then remain beyond the reach of non-philosophers? This problem of the “objectivity of philosophy”, that is to say: of the possibility for the content of philosophy to be present in the existence of each and everyone, is shared by Solger with a number of thinkers of his time, including Fichte and Schelling. Both Fichte and Schelling thought at one time or another that they could find in the *aesthetic* point of view a means for rendering the superior content of philosophy accessible to the ordinary person, to human beings “as a whole” (and not merely to their reason). In a sense, this same ambition can be found in the *philosophical dialogue* as Solger conceives it. In equilibrium between art and philosophy, the dialogical form has to make the revelation of the idea accessible in a living manner. The “objectivity” of philosophy would then be achieved via the aesthetic path. But perhaps the dominant and widespread image of “Solger the aesthetician” may have prevented interpreters from attributing the rightful place to another path that interested him just as much – the *political* path. Parallel to the perpetuation of the flashes of the idea in the element of philosophical thought, the author of *Erwin* wanted to conceive of another type of stabilization of revelation, within the state and legal and political life.

## 5. Political Philosophy: the Individual, State and the Concept of Humankind

Once again, there are good reasons for not confining ourselves to the restrictive image of Solger the “aesthetician” or the “theorist of romantic irony”. Solger studied law at the University of Halle between 1799 and 1802; he showed interest in political philosophy, especially in his *Philosophical Conversations* (*Philosophische Gespräche*, 1817), as well as in his correspondence with Raumer and with Hagen. The year before his death, he intended to publish a book on the philosophy of right and the State.<sup>221</sup> The text *Philosophie des Rechts und Staats* appeared posthumously in 1826 in the *Nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel*<sup>222</sup>: it is most likely a collection of Solger’s preparatory notes for the courses on political philosophy that he

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<sup>221</sup> See the letter to the publisher Dümmler, 16.06.1819: “I have not succeeded, my dearest friend, in handing in my book on the philosophy of right and State for this summer. Hence, I have decided to directly offer it to you. Perhaps you could publish it next winter. [...] I sincerely hope that it might be published soon, as so many phenomena in the present time are in need of a vigorous defense and application of what is right [...]” (Nachlass Solger, *Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, Berlin; I am grateful to Anne Baillet for her transcription of the manuscript).

<sup>222</sup> See Part One of this article, footnote 10.



regularly held at the University of Berlin between 1813 and 1819<sup>223</sup> and it would have probably furnished the materials for the projected book. We are here faced with a difficult text, that is sometimes repetitive, and sometimes rather incomplete. Despite the formal appearance of a unified single text, it might be a juxtaposition of several versions of Solger's course.

If we are to take this text seriously, and that is my intention here, it will inevitably change the focus in the interpretation of Solger's work. The conception of the State and right developed in Solger's writings would seem closer to a Hegelian philosophy of "objective spirit" than to any aesthetic-romantic solution to the problem of the "objectivity" of philosophy – that is to say, thinking of the ways for philosophy itself to become life and reality. In fact, it should be recalled here that in his *Review* of Solger's *Posthumous Writings* (1828), Hegel declared that he "completely agreed in all points"<sup>224</sup> with Solger's political philosophy – a hypothetical convergence which has not yet been the subject of detailed research.<sup>225</sup>

### a) Limits of revelation in art and in religion

Solger understood the State as one of the forms of the revelation of the idea in existence; he even calls it "the system of the existence of the idea."<sup>226</sup> How should this existence of the idea in the legal and political sphere be interpreted?

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<sup>223</sup> According to Fricke, Solger taught the "philosophical theory of right" (*Philosophische Rechtslehre*) in the summer semesters 1813, 1816, 1817, 1818 and in the winter semester 1819/20; he gave his course on 'politics' during the winter of 1818 and summer 1819 (H. Fricke, *Karl W.F. Solger*, 261-262). (According to the more recent survey by W. Virmond, Solger taught the philosophy of right in the summer semesters 1816 and 1818, and politics in the summer semester 1819 (W. Virmond, ed., *Die Vorlesungen der Berliner Universität 1810-1834*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011, 123, 167, 191).

<sup>224</sup> Hegel, *Solger-Rezension*, HW 11, 272. However, on the *difference between the metaphysics* of Solger and Hegel, see P. D. Bubbio, "Solger's notion of sacrifice as double negation", *The Heythrop Journal* 2009: 206-214.

<sup>225</sup> For a beginning of such a research, see M. Galland-Szymkowiak, "Hegel, Solger und die Theorie des Willens als Grundlage der politischen Philosophie", *Hegel-Jahrbuch* 2009: 160-166; "État, Église et individu. Deux idéalismes face à la question de l'union des Églises protestantes (Hegel, Solger)", *Revue germanique internationale*, 2008/4: 9-31.

More generally on Solger's political philosophy: M. Galland-Szymkowiak, "Individuum, Staat und Existenz der Idee. Die politische Philosophie Karl Solgers", in *Grundzüge der Philosophie Karl Solgers*, ed. by A. Baillot and M. Galland-Szymkowiak (Zurich/Berlin: LIT, 2014), 225-242 – of which I provide a synthesis in the following pages.

<sup>226</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 314. See 329.

In *art* and *religion*, the phenomenalization of the idea coincides with the negation of finite existence.<sup>227</sup> Reality (of the world or of my consciousness) becomes the presence of the idea – a paradoxical one, which cannot last except for the duration of a flash of lightning, for an *instant* of aesthetic or mystical grace.

Each of the two [= art and religion] is a particular world, and each of them is simultaneously existence [*Existenz*], in that [...] each of them merges reality with the idea. However, in this way precisely this reality becomes annihilated in both and yet it ought and must be there. Hence, it can only be if it also elevates itself to essential existence [*Daseyn*].<sup>228</sup>

However, if revelation is at the same time creation *and* annihilation of the finite, how is it possible to conceive a texture of the finite such that it does not dissolve itself instantaneously? Is the very idea of an “essential existence” nothing else than a futile oxymoron?

Thus, what is at stake with the conception of the State is clearly to think a modality of the existence of the idea that would no longer be an instantaneous, but a perennial one:

[The State] is an idea *fixed in real existence, a lasting order and a resting universe of acting*.<sup>229</sup>

The *State* is the totality of essential *existence* through which the idea of the good is made real in acting as an existing world system [*bestehendes Weltsystem*].<sup>230</sup>

Art is certainly an *action* that gives existence to the idea; however, such an existence is purely an individual one (in the subject as well as in the artwork), and therefore a vanishing one. The legal and political organization and life, on the other hand, makes the ordinary world into a permanent actualization of the idea and this happens as a (new) world system [*Weltsystem*].<sup>231</sup> Our existence in the society and in the State is no longer an existence that is purely relative and finite, which annihilates itself in the idea (and annihilates it in

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<sup>227</sup> “Just as in religion our own consciousness passes into the divine thought as a pure revelation of the latter; so in beauty the reality of the world, in which we live.” (Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 69, M., 56).

<sup>228</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 311.

<sup>229</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 330 (italics in the original).

<sup>230</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 313 (italics in the original). Recalling that Hegel speaks about the State as an “ethical universe (*das sittliche Universum*)” (*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, HW 7, 26).

<sup>231</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 313, 330. Compare this with: Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, HW 7, 46, §4.

turn): it becomes itself “something lasting and essential”, or again “genuine existence [*zwahres Daseyn*].”<sup>232</sup> Although it is not always the case that Solger distinguishes between *Existenz* and *Dasein*, the latter is here understood as the presence of the idea, while the first rather designates finite existence as such.

Yet to what extent is this compatible with the metaphysical foundations of Solger’s philosophy? How is such a *perennial* revelation of the idea possible if existence is defined as “the nothingness of the essence”?<sup>233</sup> Solger explicitly designates *individuality* as the key to this problem.<sup>234</sup> What needs to be examined is the individual as a moral agent.

### b) Individuality and the arbitrary or free will

While animal individuality immediately has its principle in its genus and is reduced to an expression of this genus,<sup>235</sup> human individuality presents this particularity that it poses *for itself* as such. “The human being puts his representations in opposition to himself as one”: abstraction and reflection make the human being the point where the natural world reverts to an ideal world,<sup>236</sup> where the deployment of the absolute unity in its oppositions becomes the object of a conscious representation. In other words: in self-consciousness, the unity with oneself takes on the significance of an *activity*: the self-positing of the I as one. The individual human knows himself as such through the activity that makes him conscious of the universal identity of the I=I as existing singularly in him.<sup>237</sup>

Consciousness of the self as singular *and* plural, universal *and* particular, comes to everyone through the intermediary of *acts* which posit each time their personal identity as simultaneously particular.<sup>238</sup> These acts are the product of his faculty of decision-making or the arbitrary or free will (*Willkür*). “The arbitrary will is therefore the proper act of existence [*Daseyn*], in which the human being is what he is.”<sup>239</sup> The arbitrary will is the existence

<sup>232</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 330.

<sup>233</sup> Solger, UWB, NS II, 172; cf. Part One of this article: “Revelation, the transition of the idea into existence.”

<sup>234</sup> See Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 317.

<sup>235</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 165.

<sup>236</sup> On the relation between nature and thought cf. Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 275.

<sup>237</sup> See Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 333.

<sup>238</sup> Compare with Hegel, GPR, §124: “What is the subject, it is the series of its actions”.

<sup>239</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 336; cf. p. 305: “The point of the arbitrary will is therefore the one in which the original infinite existence, *pure becoming*, does not reveal itself as a principle, as in dialectics, but as the real moment of existence, as an existential act.” The expression *Existentialact* (see, too, PhiRS, 273) is probably borrowed from Fichte, *Principien der Gottes-*,

as an act, the active insertion of the individual in a network of real relationships and oppositions. At the same time, arbitrary or free will is the act of a subject that is one and that refers his or her own acts to himself or herself. Solger can then identify this arbitrary or free will with the very individuality of the human being:

The individual itself is therefore nothing but the *arbitrary will* [*Willkür*], and its particular existence [*Daseyn*] is acting, which is only the phenomenon of the arbitrary will. [...] The individual has to constantly act otherwise it would be nothing, and in this acting it is nothing but the arbitrary will.<sup>240</sup>

Solger again appropriates here the Fichtean model of productive hovering<sup>241</sup> to conceive the arbitrary as a dynamic unification of the two directions of action, self-determination (or determination by the universal, the ought (*Sollen*)<sup>242</sup>) and particular determination (by the drive (*Trieb*)). Like Hegel, he points out that the action itself cannot be understood except as the effectuation of the *unity* of these two directions.

In the actual moment of the arbitrary will [...] the self-determination and the one from outside are no longer opposed, but wholly flow together as One.<sup>243</sup>

The individual cannot create this unity, but only receives it from the “absolute fact” of revelation, as we have seen. The action cannot exist “if the *idea* does not flash forth in the moment of cancellation.”<sup>244</sup> Solger therefore wants to oppose the formalism stemming from the Kantian conception of morality, by stressing that philosophy cannot consider “[the good] as a universal rule of acting, or as an ideal, an infinitely distant goal.”<sup>245</sup> The principle of all action is the unity of the idea (of the good) in me. Nevertheless, *individual moral action* cannot conserve this unity as a unity during its effectuation, during its transition into existence. While the source of action is indeed the unity of the idea of the good that is present in me:

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*Sitten- und Rechtslehre*, the textbook of a lecture course that Solger attended in Spring 1805 (Fichte, GA II/7, 375). On the arbitrary will, see: UWB, NS II, 165-168.

<sup>240</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 336-337.

<sup>241</sup> See for example, Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 303.

<sup>242</sup> See Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 302.

<sup>243</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 300; cf. 334-335.

<sup>244</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 301.

<sup>245</sup> Solger, UWB, NS II, 167.

this unity can only gradually pass over into [the] relations [of existence]; it can only be carried out by means of a particular acting, and never completely, because our existence itself always still contains the concepts of the universal and the particular in their separation. Therefore, the idea of the good is something that *should* become, it is not yet, it is an *ought*, and reality and idea still always remain separate from each other. Reality is presupposed as existent; the idea ought to be, and there never arises a complete interpenetration.<sup>246</sup>

A singular individual, as such, can only produce an irremediably particular action,<sup>247</sup> which does not “reveal” “the” good, but always only the irremediable duality of the dialectical pair: good/evil. Acting in itself, separating itself from the idea becomes “a *real or positive nothing* and this is what we call ‘evil’. However, to the extent that it is idea itself, it is the *good*.”<sup>248</sup> The unsurpassable duality of good and evil is thus the ethical correlative of the ontological and gnoseological definition of existence as the ‘nothingness of the essence’.

Hence, even a moral action is not able to produce an “essential existence”, a perennial system of the living idea. For this, according to the recurring Solgerian-Schellingian schema that we have already encountered<sup>249</sup>, the idea of the good needs to be both a ground (*Grund*) of action *and* already present in the reality invested by this action.

[...] individual action is itself at the boundary between the idea and nothingness and cannot escape the latter if the idea does not continually merge into reality as something subsisting and at once lie at the basis of it, which can only take place through a being (*Daseyn*) which is erected, as it were, over real action by action.<sup>250</sup>

What has to be thought as the condition of the realization of the idea in *our* daily world (not in those of art or religion) is a second level of existence. But

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<sup>246</sup> Solger, *Vorlesungen*, 65, M., 52-53.

<sup>247</sup> “A subsisting world system should not be sought in the domain of ethics, where everything is rendered real through individual acting” (Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 313).

<sup>248</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 306.

<sup>249</sup> According to this Schelling-inspired schema (*Freiheitsschrift*, 1809: *Wesen als Grund/Wesen als Existenz*), the absolute unity (the essence) is both the *ground (Grund)* or basis of all existence *and* the essence that has already passed into existence. Cf. for example, Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 301; as well as p. 319: “What the concept creates has to already be opposed to it as being. It has to simultaneously be the *ground* of the same being, which brings it forth”. This schema is found again, for instance, in the symbol/allegory pair in Solger; it also repeatedly appears in the text on political philosophy.

<sup>250</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 313.

there is no action except individual action: hence, how can the individual carry out a type of action that surpasses the finitude of moral action?

**c) The perennial existence of the idea in the State: the idea of genus (*Gattung*)**

What is at stake here is to understand if and how this original unity of self-determination and particular determination is able to pass into effective action without immediately dividing themselves into a pair of opposites (like good and evil). This may take place if the individual does not inscribe its action into a purely relative existence, but into an existence where the unity of the idea is already particularized.

For Solger, such an action is possible if the individual acts according to the idea *understood as the idea of humankind (menschliche Gattung)* – a thesis he may well have derived from Fichte’s 1804-1805 lectures on the *Characteristics of the Present Age*.

[The universal concept of self-determination] must [...] have a real existence and it only has this as a genus insofar as it is presented in the whole by individuals. [...] This concept] is in the [individual] thereby that every individual in its arbitrary will bears and expresses the whole reality of the genus as the universal concept.<sup>251</sup>

Hence, the existence in which the idea of the good can become ordinary reality is not that of things, *but only that of human individuals in their free interactions*, where each one considers the other a singularization of the concept of humankind. In my understanding of Solger’s theory, intersubjectivity opens up a second level of existence: here existence is no longer the nothingness of the essence, but the putting into relation of the idea with *one-self that already exists in an infinity of singular forms*. In order for the idea to unite itself at this second level of existence, each individual is required to relate his action to the unity of humankind. He can relate to it as a universal (the concept of humankind), or as a concept immediately individualized (humankind in ‘this human being’).

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<sup>251</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 315.

Now, such an existence of humankind, in which the genus is completely related to its concept and the individual only lives for the concept of the genus, is called ‘the State’.<sup>252</sup>

#### d) Right, the State, and Political life

Through the manner in which it organizes the inter-individual relations, the State is the *existing* unity of the self-determination and the drive (*Trieb*), a unity that is constitutive of all acting. State is not a simple rule imposed on actions from the outside, but is indeed, Solger writes, “the action itself, yet conceived as original essence and subsisting being (*stehendes Seyn*).”<sup>253</sup> It *accomplishes* what in moral action remains only the principle and the aim.

The State is *the existence of the idea* [*das Daseyn der Idee*]. Morality [*Sittlichkeit*] is *its becoming*. *Individuality* or existence [*Existenz*] governs in morality, perfect existence [*das vollkommene Daseyn*] in the State.<sup>254</sup>

The presentation of the unity of the idea understood as the idea of genus in a “perfect existence”, is carried out again in two dialectically correlated directions. The *State in the broad sense* includes *rights* and laws on the one hand, which have to relate all particular individual action to the idea of genus, and on the other hand, the *State in the narrow sense*, in which the idea of genus presents itself as an acting individuality.<sup>255</sup>

In the system of *right* as a totality of laws, the particular drives are orientated according to the concept of genus, and therefore universalized. Solger defines right as “an ethical nature.”<sup>256</sup> In fact, ‘nature’ in general is according to him the deployment of the unity of the idea in the oppositions of existence by means of necessary laws; in a deployment of this kind all particularity is included in the universality of the idea.<sup>257</sup> The right constitutes

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<sup>252</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 318. See the 10<sup>th</sup> lecture of Fichte’s *Characteristics*. Fichte stresses that a constraint is necessary for individuals to put their forces at the service of humankind; this coercive approach is not to be found in Solger.

<sup>253</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 294.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.* (Italics in the original).

<sup>255</sup> We encounter the duality: essence as foundation / essence as existence, described above in note 248.

<sup>256</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 337-338.

<sup>257</sup> “The concept of nature is based on the fact that the antithesis develops itself out of the ground and within the identity of the ground, and that the particularity as such expresses the universal concept in itself. If therefore any kind of relation is to take place, in which the universal and the particular merge into one another as the identical, then there has to be an original unity in the two, which would contain the antithesis as the transition of both sides into one another, and this is *moral nature* (*sittliche Natur*) because it only takes place in acting.” (Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 320).

an ‘ethical nature’ because it furnishes a legal framework in which all particular action is primarily related to the universality of the idea of humankind.

Only through nature do the universal and particular pass through a common relation and out of this common ground into one another. Only through an ethical nature can the individuals as individuals still have essential existence [*wesentliches Daseyn*]. This is called ‘right’ [*das Recht*].<sup>258</sup>

On its side, the *State in the restricted sense* presents “the *free acting [arising] from the idea* as something real”<sup>259</sup>, that is to say: not as a *Sollen*. Instead of relating particular actions to the idea of the genus, it deploys the latter in existence – however, not by dissolving it, but by *individualizing* it. This is possible because the action of the State does not concern things but *persons*.<sup>260</sup> Persons are individuals considered as subjects of right, i.e. individuals acting under the determination of the concept of genus.<sup>261</sup> Because the State *stricto sensu* is not constituted by anything else than the relations between persons<sup>262</sup>, it is an *essential existence*, i.e. a legally institutionalized system of relations,<sup>263</sup> unified by the idea of a genus that is being constantly individualized.

The purpose of the State is the acting of the concept of genus as an individual, whereby the acting of all individuals becomes transformed into an acting of the State.<sup>264</sup>

The action of the State is focused in turn in two directions: on the one hand, by means of *justice*<sup>265</sup> it guarantees that particular persons act in conformity with the law; on the other hand, it individualizes the idea of genus in a determinate *constitution*. In the constitution “individuality and the particular existence of the State can be recognized, but not as an arbitrarily finite individuality, but as the concept of genus.”<sup>266</sup> It determines the organization of the State and the framework of its action in such a way that this action

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<sup>258</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 319-320.

<sup>259</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 340.

<sup>260</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 340-341.

<sup>261</sup> “However, in persons, the universal concept of acting is only mediated via right” (Solger, *PhiRS*, NS II, 341).

<sup>262</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 343.

<sup>263</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 324.

<sup>264</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 353.

<sup>265</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 344.

<sup>266</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 345. Solger notes that the constitution is *both* something historical and given, as well as the expression of the essence (*ibid.*).



always expresses the universal concept of humankind.<sup>267</sup> The concrete *political life* in the State (*die Politik*) is the intermediate term between justice and the constitution. Its function is to constantly unify the individual action (in conformity with the right) of persons and the idea of humankind individualized in the State.<sup>268</sup>

The political philosophy of Solger, briefly presented here in its main features, is set out in a complicated text that also extends certain points of his metaphysics. It offers a new field of research and prevents us from continuing to consider Solger as a mere “aesthetician”. One of the tasks of future research could be to investigate the relationship between Solger's political philosophy and those of Fichte (mostly the *Characteristics of the Present Age*), Schelling (Solger's text shows proximity with some features of the *System of Transcendental Idealism*) and Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, published a few months after Solger's death.

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The aim of this article was to present, through an immanent, synthetic, and panoramic reading, Solger's philosophical reflection in its different fields; as well as to show in the course of this exposition how the thought of revelation concretely generates every part of his philosophical system. The ‘absolute and eternal fact’ of *Offenbarung*, the eternal movement of self-revelation and self-annihilation of the idea in finite existence, is the principle, not in the sense of a *Grundsatz*, but in sense of an omnipresent active center, of a constantly renewed experience. Revelation constitutes the ground from which all unity (of being or knowing) is grasped – it includes the unity of the consciousness of the individual self.<sup>269</sup> Far from being reduced to reflections on beauty and

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<sup>267</sup> Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 346. The constitution fixes the relations between the *people* as an empirical totality, and the idea of humankind in its individualization (PhiRS, NS II, 248). The latter can be understood as individualizing in an entire people – *democracy* –, in a group of individuals – *aristocracy* – or in an individual person – *monarchy*, which, according to Solger, best corresponds to an individualization of the idea.

<sup>268</sup> “This political life proceeds from the State, is restricted in single individuals only by the concept of right, however, it has the positive goal of transforming all acting of single people and all effectiveness to things into an acting of the State, whereas the individualized concept itself can only ever act as the concept of the whole” (Solger, PhiRS, NS II, 345-346).

<sup>269</sup> “Philosophy that commences with self-consciousness and develops everything from it, and is undoubtedly the true philosophy, has in my opinion become so entangled in self-consciousness and its different functions that it has only ever relatively constructed it, and has not arrived at the all-embracing moment where self-consciousness cancels itself again, and only finds itself again in another, which alone is in itself, and in which self-consciousness alone is something truly existing, namely in God” (Solger, Letter to Tieck, 19.11.1815, NS I, 376, Matenko 191).

art, Solger's work aims at systematically explicating human reality (theory of knowledge, religion and mythology, art, morality and politics) according to the intuition and dialectical thought of revelation – the intuition received in faith, and the dialectical thinking carried out by philosophical rationality. By emphasizing that this unfathomable foundation, this eternally renewed event cannot be produced but only received by consciousness, Solger's philosophy testifies to an intuition that is equally present in the work of the later Fichte or the later Schelling, and that inevitably leads to a breach in the philosophical system. Solger wants to construct a position that goes beyond, on the one hand, the limitations of Fichte's transcendental idealism and Schelling's identity philosophy, and on the other hand of Jacobi's dichotomy between faith and knowledge. By doing so he articulates the tension between idealistic philosophical motifs and romantic thinking, the transcendental point of view and the consciousness of the speculative, between an affirmation of the presence of the absolute and an insistence on the unsurpassable finitude of our existence. Reading Solger is an invitation to question the scope and relevance of these classifications in the history of philosophy.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Translated from the French by Laure Cahen-Maurel and David W. Wood and revised in collaboration with the author. I would like to warmly thank David and Laure for their careful work.

**Review Essays**

**Comptes rendus**

**Note e discussioni**

**Besprechungen**



# Symphilosophie

*Rivista internazionale sulla filosofia romantica*

## Come ordinare un sistema di asistematicità

**Nota a Novalis, "Scritti filosofici", a cura di Fabrizio Desideri e Giampiero Moretti, Morcelliana 2019.**

*Giovanni Panno\**

„Ein Dichter! Ein Philosoph! Ein Denker!“ la policromia dell’opera di Novalis lo rende un caso difficile dal punto di vista editoriale. Qualsiasi silloge dei suoi scritti corre il rischio della parzialità, ora a vantaggio degli aspetti cosiddetti filosofici, ora di quelli più squisitamente poetici. Solo a partire dagli anni ‘60 con la bella edizione critica curata prima da Paul Kluckhohn e Richard Samuel, poi da Hans-Joachim Mähl e Gerhard Schulz (Kohlhammer 1960 e seguenti, quattro volumi con addenda) si è posto ordine al letterale arbitrio delle precedenti edizioni. Eppure questo arbitrio ed il suo superamento offrono l’opportunità di interrogare il fondamentale nesso fra forma e contenuto dell’opera filosofica di Novalis. Discuterò questo tema a lato dell’eccellente *Novalis. Scritti filosofici*, curato da Fabrizio Desideri e Giampiero Moretti per i tipi di Morcelliana (da qui in avanti abbreviato come: SF, numero di frammento e pagina; l’edizione critica *Novalis Schriften* è abbreviata con: NS numero di volume, frammento e pagina).

Si tratta in realtà di una nuova veste del lavoro già pubblicato per Einaudi nel 1993 e da tempo non più disponibile. I due editori, profondi conoscitori del pensiero (primo) romantico (e non solo), mantengono per Morcelliana l’impianto della precedente edizione con una breve premessa in cui accennano alla scelta del nuovo titolo e, accanto alla correzione dei refusi, offrono una bibliografia aggiornata e completa. La nuova edizione italiana richiama il titolo dell’edizione critica *Novalis Schriften*, a differenza della precedente scelta di Einaudi con *Opera filosofica*. I due tomi del precedente lavoro sono ora presentati in un volume unico, là dove rimane la suddivisione

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\* PhD, Docente a contratto, Universität Tübingen, Philosophisches Seminar, Bursagasse 1, D – 72070 Tübingen – giovanni.panno@gmail.com

editoriale (di Moretti è la cura della prima, di Desideri della seconda parte. La sezione XIII è tradotta da Luca Crescenzi). Perché parliamo di un'edizione che riprende senza sostanziali alterazioni quella precedente?

Il motivo è semplice: l'operazione editoriale, unica nel panorama internazionale, rende possibile un confronto molto approfondito con l'opera cosiddetta "filosofica" dell'autore. Prendiamo ad esempio la bella edizione catalana di Robert Caner-Liese (*Estudios sobre Fichte y otros escritos*, Madrid 2007): accanto alle *Fichte Studien* e alla *Cristianità o l'Europa*, il curatore accoglie nella scelta *Polline, Fede e amore, Dialogo e monologo*. Un'antologia molto interessante, cui però mancano, fra gli altri, i "materiali per l'enciclopedistica" novalisiana, noti come *Allgemeines Brouillon*. L'edizione di Desideri e Moretti presenta invece tutti gli scritti in cui si possa rilevare una riflessione filosofica in senso lato e non siano redatti in forma di poesia, romanzo o lettera. Non troveremo quindi l'*Enrico di Ofterdingen* né i *Discepoli di Sais*, che potremmo definire *Bildungsromane*, né gli *Inni alla notte* e i *Canti Spirituali*, raccolti tutti nel primo volume delle *Novalis Schriften*. Sull'esclusione di questi testi tornerò più avanti, anzitutto darò ragione qui di seguito di come è articolata l'edizione di Morcelliana.

### **La prima parte: Dagli scritti giovanili a Dialoghi e Monologo (a cura di G. Moretti)**

Fra gli scritti raccolti nella prima parte, corrispondente al primo tomo dell'edizione Einaudi, incontreremo anzitutto lavori inediti e di fatto disponibili al pubblico soltanto dalla loro inclusione nell'edizione critica (per quanto riguarda il *Philosophisches Werk* I dal 1965, ora 1983). Fra questi: gli scritti giovanili (sezione I, ad esempio "Sulle ordalie, Sull'entusiasmo"), le *Fichte Studien* del 1795-6 e gli studi su Hemsterhuis e Kant (Sezione III, 1797). Il volume contiene inoltre due gruppi di studi già pubblicati in vita (*Blüthenstaub* e *Glauben und Liebe*, nel 1798, sezioni IV e V) e i gruppi di frammenti che ne costituiscono l'immediato ambito di elaborazione (rispettivamente *Vermischte Bemerkungen* e *Politische Aphorismen*). Chiudono la prima parte due gruppi distinti di lavori: la sezione VI raccoglie frammenti e studi di varia natura che potremmo definire genericamente "estetica" fra cui spiccano i *Frammenti logologici* e i *Frammenti di Teplitz*. L'ultima sezione presenta due testi in cui il frammento lascia il posto alla forma dialogica (*Dialoghi* e *Monologo*). Si giunge cronologicamente al 1799, ma la riflessione che porta a questi testi ha luogo in un brevissimo ed intenso torno di tempo e si sovrappone, se non alla stesura, di certo alla concezio-

ne dei testi per l'*Allgemeines Brouillon*, cui è dedicato lo spazio principale della seconda parte.

È quasi superfluo osservare che la pubblicazione delle *Fichte Studien* in Germania diede l'avvio ad un approccio differente ai testi di Novalis. Come punto d'arrivo di questa riflessione sono da ricordare i fondamentali lavori di Manfred Frank (*Unendliche Annäherung*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1997 e soprattutto *Selbstgefühl*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 2002) accanto a quelli di altri studiosi che hanno fatto fruttare i materiali dell'edizione critica (ad esempio Bernhard Loheide, *Fichte und Novalis*, Rodopi, Amsterdam 2000). Probabilmente costituirà una nuova tappa della ricezione di Novalis il testo di Violetta Waibel, da tempo annunciato, *System der Systemlosigkeit*, di cui soprattutto la seconda parte annuncia *Ein philosophisch-systematischer Kommentar der ›Fichte-Studien‹ Friedrich von Hardenbergs* (Paderborn, Schöningh, in corso di pubblicazione).

Prima dell'edizione critica vi sono stati certo tentativi anche teoreticamente rilevanti di lettura della filosofia di Hardenberg (ad esempio Theodor Haering, *Novalis als Philosoph*, Kohlhammer 1954), ma spesso al pensiero di Novalis si associava una vaga idea di Romanticismo (sic!) e una versione "magica" dell'Io fichtiano. Entrambi questi concetti assumono un carattere differente alla luce degli studi fichtiani, nonché in base alle annotazioni a Kant e Hemsterhuis. Infatti «Romanti[c]izzare il mondo» ed «identificare il Sé inferiore con un Sé migliore» (SF 105, 391; NS II 105, 545) costituiscono un processo di formazione contemporanea di Io e mondo e sono sostanziati da una dialettica che è possibile comprendere se si parte dal lavoro sulle categorie di Io e Non Io a ridosso della prima *Dottrina della scienza*. Allo stesso modo il noto "idealismo magico" si svincola dalla mera espressione di un ipertrofismo dell'Io, complice di letture che ne esaltano l'assoluta potenza trasformatrice (ad esempio Julius Evola, *L'idealismo magico*, Roma 1925, ora Genova 1989, p. 148, qui privo, quanto-meno *apertis verbis*, di passaggi filosofico-politici). Nell'*Allgemeines Brouillon*, quindi cronologicamente dopo gli *Studi fichtiani*, la tra-sformazione di interno in esterno, esterno in interno, pensiero in mondo e *ordine inverso*, sono definite come operazioni proprie di un «idealista magico» (SF 338, 760; NS 338, 301). Ma come è possibile comprendere il concetto di idealismo del *Brouillon* senza il riferimento a Fichte (e Spinoza) che troviamo per primi negli *Studi fichtiani*? Beninteso: si tratta sempre di categorie che vengono rielaborate, fagocitate, in parte superate, pur sempre in tensione dialettica, per cui si deve lavorare anche per sottrazione; per farlo, però, gli elementi dell'operazione devono essere noti.

Un ulteriore esempio introduce il passaggio alla seconda parte del volume, di cui sezione importante è l'*Allgemeines Brouillon*. L'attribuzione del ruolo simbolico della monarchia in *Fede e amore* («sovrano mistico» SF 15, 349; NS II, 15, 487) o la celebre formula «invece di Non Io-Tu» dell'*Allgemeines Brouillon* (SF 820, 876; NS III, 820, 429) sono comprensibili a partire da un'affinità al contesto fichtiano – e della sua trasformazione. «Filosofia è dunque – sofistica dell'Io – immagine trascen-dentale della nostra coscienza» (SF 46, 95; NS II 46, 136) annota Novalis a margine del commento a Fichte. Si tratta di pensare la capacità dell'Io di passare oltre se stesso per realizzare il proprio sé trascendentale: «Io non sono nella misura in cui mi pongo, ma in cui mi tolgo» (*aufheben*, in senso hegeliano *ante litteram*, lo preferisco qui ad “annullo” di Moretti, SF 278, 148; NS II 278, 196). Il movimento di auto-toglimento, *in nuce* negli *Studi fichtiani*, si ritrova nel concetto di autoalienazione di *Polline* (*Selbstentäußerung*, SF 26, 306; NS II 26, 422) e fonda il passaggio dal “non Io” al “Tu” due anni più tardi nell'*Allgemeines Brouillon*. Ma si tratta di un concetto con cui Novalis fa i conti in tutti i contesti di cui si occupa perché su di esso si basa *formazione* (*Bildung*) del mondo, quale missione affidata all'uomo (SF 32, 308; NS II 32, 426). È quindi importante avere accesso ai diversi scritti quasi sinotticamente, seppure la costruzione di una rete di riferimenti non sia priva di rischi.

### **La seconda parte: *Allgemeines Brouillon* e il problema di una proiezione degli *Studi fichtiani* sulla produzione successiva (a cura di Fabrizio Desideri)**

Il gruppo di scritti più importante della seconda parte è rappresentato dai già citati «materiali per un'enciclopedistica» dell'*Allgemeines Brouillon* (sezione IX), preceduto dagli *Studi scientifico-naturali di Freiberg* (sezione VIII). Il carattere di studi a prevalenza scientifica e poi tecnica torna nelle ultime due sezioni del volume (XII e XIII). In ordine cronologico trovano spazio fra questi gruppi di frammenti le glosse alle *Idee* di Schlegel (sezione X) e *La Cristianità ovvero l'Europa* (sezione XI). In questo modo la seconda parte presenta i materiali dell'edizione critica *Das philosophische Werk 2* (1968, ora 1984).

Leggere gli scritti dal 1796 come mero svolgimento dei temi presenti negli *Studi fichtiani* non rende ragione dell'evoluzione del pensiero di Novalis. D'altro canto, senza di essi *Polline*, *Teplitz*, ma anche *Cristianità o Europa* o il *Brouillon* sarebbero privi di un'essenziale trama teoretica. Ciò non significa che i temi degli *Studi fichtiani* siano tutti ripresi o sviluppati in seguito, ma la loro presenza rende possibile tracciare dei percorsi giustificabili in modo immanente rispetto al pensiero di Novalis. Si pensi ad esempio



all'ammirazione per Spinoza e Fichte presente nelle *Fichte-Studien*: «Spinoza si è elevato fino alla natura – Fichte fino all'Io, ovvero la persona. Io, fino alla tesi Dio» (SF 151, 114; NS II 151, 157). Nell'*Allgemeines Brouillon* Novalis affianca ai due riferimenti Plotino quale suprema sintesi di una dialettica fra immanenza e trascendenza di natura, Dio e Io, addirittura di realismo e idealismo critico (SF 924, 894; NS II, 924, 445). Solo tenendo conto di un lavoro sul rapporto dialettico fra Io e la propria origine, Io e Natura a ridosso della *Dottrina della scienza* è possibile comprendere come, nei frammenti dell'*Enciclopedistica*, Novalis chiami in causa il Neoplatonismo. Il riferimento agli *Studi fichtiani* offre quindi la possibilità di riconoscere dei percorsi, siano essi accennati oppure svolti sottotraccia. All'arbitrio delle edizioni precedenti ha certo contribuito la forma della scrittura novalisiana, il frammento, che offre una radicale apertura ermeneutica e costringe a cercare un ordine.

Già da subito, con la primissima edizione degli scritti nel 1802 ad opera di Friedrich Schlegel e Ludwig Tieck, si nota come questa radicale apertura possa rappresentare anche una debolezza: proiettando la forma dell'esposizione sul suo contenuto, si cerca un completamento del frammentato. Il risultato era l'immagine del genio (primo)romantico la cui opera andava anzitutto "ordinata". Ancora nel 1908 Hermann Friedemann (Bong, Leipzig) proponeva un'edizione degli scritti che presentava i frammenti dell'*Allgemeines Brouillon* secondo categorie estrinseche, ad esempio "persönliche, philosophische (!), psychologische, anthropologische, religiöse ... ästhetische (!) Fragmente...". Sulla stessa linea si mossero le edizioni italiane, sia quella di G. A. Alfero e Vincenzo Errante (Milano 1942), che quella curata da Enzo Paci con la traduzione di Ervino Pocar (già 1948 per l'Istituto Editoriale Italiano, poi Rizzoli 1976 e ancora 1981). Non sono mancate riduzioni dei testi di Novalis a piccoli breviari di salvezza spirituale (Novalis, *Das Amen des Universums*, Theine & Peitsch, Bad Oeynhausen 1947) o letture che lo elevavano a profeta (Rudolf Meyer, *Novalis. Das Christus-Erlebnis und neue Geistesoffenbarung*, Urachhaus, Stuttgart 1939). È pur vero che, presi a sé, alcuni frammenti o gruppi di frammenti, così come l'opera poetica, offrono il fianco ad una lettura anche in simili direzioni. Ma gli scritti di Novalis sono un caleidoscopio: anche là dove il contesto dei gruppi in cui prendono forma sia ben definito o addirittura gli scritti già pubblicati in vita (*Polline, Fede e amore* ad esempio), o là dove lo scritto abbandona la forma del frammento per farsi saggio, narrazione, fiaba (*La Cristianità o Europa*), basta spostare alcuni elementi e la forma del disegno cambia. L'edizione critica, e così il testo curato da Moretti e Desideri, mostra come alcune letture siano più plausibili di altre e permette di riconoscere linee evolutive immanenti ai testi. Si tratta, insomma, di riconoscere i segni, saper leggere le tracce.

L'importanza di una *ars combinatoria* (così Desideri nella bella introduzione al *Brouillon*, SF 687) è una cifra della seconda parte che ospita la grande raccolta del *Brouillon*: cifra della scrittura, ma anche della lettura.

Uno stacco stilistico è rappresentato dalla sopra citata *Cristianità o Europa*. Quest'ultimo scritto presenta una carrellata storica da un Medioevo di grande armonia spirituale fino al tempo dell'autore. La narrazione continua, a tratti dal carattere fiabesco, non sembra avere molte affinità col tema di un'ermeneutica del frammento e con il "sistema di asistematicità" novalisiano (di nuovo già annunciato nelle *Fichte Studien*:

das eigentliche Philosophische System muß Freiheit und Unendlichkeit, oder, um es auffallend auszudrücken, Systemlosigkeit, in ein System gebracht, seyn, SF 648, 226; NS II, 648, 289).

Eppure il testo costituisce il miglior esempio di un'integrazione dei differenti ambiti del sapere su cui Novalis lavora in questi anni: per descrivere il divenire storico con il suo alternarsi di epoche lo scritto usa le categorie di cristallizzazione e scioglimento, cosicché le epoche diventano *concrezioni* della materia storica («ora siamo abbastanza in alto [...] per riconoscere in quelle bizzarre follie straordinarie cristallizzazione della materia storica», SF 957; NS III 520). I contesti religiosi, culturali e storici (Riforma, Illu-minismo, Rivoluzione Francese) sono movimenti di allontanamento *da* e riavvicinamento *ad* una (utopica) *età dell'oro* spirituale («una vera anarchia è l'elemento generatore della religione. Dall'annientamento di tutto ciò che è positivo essa solleva il suo capo glorioso come una nuova fondatrice del mondo», SF 955; NS III 517). Quale la cifra della felicità di un'epoca? La comunicazione fra le membra sparse del suo corpo: medesima cifra applicabile all'*Allgemeines Brouillon* e di fatto a tutta la speculazione novalisiana. Allo stesso modo per superare il cristallizzato bisogna mettere in comunicazione contesti e questo è possibile se si presuppone un sistema micro-macrocosmico di rimandi.

Noi ci vediamo nel sistema come membri ... comprendiamo naturalmente tutto ciò che è estraneo solo mediante autoestranamento – autotrasformazione – autosservazione (SF 820, 876) (*Selbstfremdmachung – Selbstveränderung – Selbstbeobachtung*, NS III 820, 429).

I due corni della questione, il sistema di corrispondenze micro-macrocosmico ed il superamento di sé compreso nel concetto di autotrasformazione sono elementi di una tensione presente in tutta la produzione novalisiana. Simbolicamente troviamo questo motivo nel *recit* iniziatico *I discepoli di Sais*. Purtroppo il breve racconto non è compreso nel volume di Morcelliana,

giacché l'edizione critica lo inserisce nel primo volume, accanto alle poesie e all'*Enrico di Ofterdingen*.

D'altronde dato l'imponente formato del volume unico con le sue 1183 pagine di testi e introduzioni, venti di bibliografia e ulteriori cinquanta di indici (analitico e dei nomi), non sarebbe stato pensabile introdurre nuovi materiali. Alla comprensione di alcuni passaggi sarebbero di certo utili, oltre ai due racconti iniziatici citati poco sopra, quantomeno alcune lettere. Per aspetti simbolici rilevanti sarebbe interessante anche una traduzione della breve poesia *Astralis*, appartenente all'*Enrico di Ofterdingen* ed edito da qualche anno (Sophia Vietor, *Astralis von Novalis*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2001). Forse è lecito sperare in un'edizione parallela a quella degli scritti "filosofici" contenente l'opera narrativa e poetica, con una scelta di lettere (ad esempio a Friedrich Schlegel, sulla scorta dell'edizione curata da Max Preitz già nel 1957, *Friedrich Schlegel und Novalis*, WBG, Darmstadt). Ciò consentirebbe di mettere in comunicazione alcuni aspetti fondamentali del primo Romanticismo di Novalis con quello del contemporaneo Friedrich Hölderlin, di cui recentemente sono uscite due edizioni del carteggio (a cura di Gianni Bertocchini, *Epistolario. Lettere e dediche*, Ariete, Milano 2015 e da ultimo a cura di Luigi Reitani, *Prose, teatro e lettere*, Mondadori, Milano 2019).

Gli *Scritti filosofici* editi da Morcelliana sono in ogni caso un preziosissimo strumento di lettura della filosofia di Novalis e, attraverso di essa, di esercizio dello sguardo ed interpretazione dei segni di una comunità universale.

«Alles muß in einenader greifen  
Eins durch das Andre gedeihn und reifen  
Jedes in Allen dar sich stellt  
Indem es sich mit ihnen vermischet

(*Astralis*, in Vietor, cit., p. 130, V. 65-68).

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## How to Order a System of Systemlessness

Review Essay of Novalis, *Scritti filosofici*, edited by Fabrizio Desideri and Giampiero Moretti (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2019)

*Giovanni Panno*\*

“A Poet! A Philosopher! A Thinker!” (“Ein Dichter! Ein Philosoph! Ein Denker!”) – editorially, the polychromatic nature of Novalis’s work presents a number of difficulties. Any collection of his writings runs the risk of partiality: either favoring the so-called philosophical perspective or the more exquisitely poetical one. It has only been since the 1960s, thanks to the fine historical-critical edition first edited by Paul Kluckhohn, Richard Samuel, and then by Hans-Joachim Mähl and Gerhard Schulz et al. (Kohlhammer 1960 et seq., four volumes with addenda), that it was possible to overcome the arbitrariness of all the previous editions and to arrange Novalis’s writings in the right order. And yet precisely this earlier arbitrariness and how it was overcome offer an opportunity to inquire into the fundamental links between the form and content of Novalis’s philosophical work. I will discuss this topic by examining the excellent *Novalis, Scritti filosofici*, edited by Fabrizio Desideri and Giampiero Moretti for the publisher Morcelliana.<sup>1</sup>

The present edition was previously published in an edition by Einaudi in 1993, but that edition is now no longer available. The two editors are profoundly knowledgeable about (early) romantic philosophy (and not only that field). For this new edition published by Morcelliana they have retained the framework of the earlier edition, but corrected any typos and errors, and provided an updated bibliography. They have also included a brief preface where they mention their choice of a new title. Indeed, the title *Scritti filosofici* for this new Italian edition echoes the title of the German historical-critical edition of *Novalis Schriften*, unlike the previous choice of *Opera filosofica* for Einaudi. In addition, the two volumes of the earlier edition are now published in a single volume and the editorial subdivision has been preserved (Moretti edited Part One, Desideri Part Two. Section XIII was translated by Luca

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\* PhD, Assistant Professor, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Philosophisches Seminar, Bursagasse 1, D – 72070 Tübingen – giovanni.panno@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Henceforth abbreviated as: SF, followed by fragment and page numbers; the historical-critical German edition: *Novalis Schriften*, abbreviated as HKA, followed by volume, fragment, and page numbers.

Crescenzi). However, why talk about an edition whose contents are the same as the earlier one and that does not contain any substantial modifications?

The reason is simple: this editorial undertaking, unique in an international scope, allows the reader to carry out a thorough analysis of the so-called ‘philosophical’ writings of Novalis. For example, take the beautiful Catalan edition of Novalis’s work by Robert Caner-Liese (*Estudios sobre Fichte y otros escritos*, Madrid 2007): the editor not only chose to include the *Fichte Studies* and *Christianity or Europe*, but also the texts *Pollen*, *Faith and Love*, *Dialogues* and *Monologue*. This is a highly interesting anthology. Nevertheless, it lacks among other things Novalis’s “materials for an encyclopaedia”, known under the title *Das allgemeine Brouillon*.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, this new Italian edition of Desideri and Moretti includes all of Novalis’s philosophical writings in the broadest sense of the word – i.e. those texts that are not written in the form of poetry, novels or letters. Consequently, there is no *Henry of Ofterdingen*, or the *Disciples at Sais*, both of which could be designated as *Bildungsromane*, nor do we find the *Hymns to the Night* and the *Spiritual Songs*, all of which are published in the first volume of German edition of Novalis’s *Schriften*. I will return to the omission of these texts in a moment, but before that I will outline the structure of this Morcelliana edition.

### **Part One: From the Juvenilia to *Dialogues and Monologue* (edited by G. Moretti)**

Among the writings collected in Part One (corresponding to volume one of the Einaudi edition), we first of all find those unpublished works that have only been available to the public since their inclusion in the historical-critical edition (in: *Das philosophische Werk I*, first edition 1965, revised 1983). This includes: Juvenilia (Section I, e.g. “On Ordeals”, “On Enthusiasm”), as well as the 1795-96 *Fichte Studies*<sup>3</sup> and the “Hemsterhuis Studies” and “Kant Studies” (Section III, 1797). The volume also contains two groups of writings published by Novalis himself during his lifetime: *Blüthenstaub* (*Pollen*) and *Glauben und Liebe* (*Faith and Love*) – both from 1798 (Sections IV and V), and those collections of fragments from which they were originally drawn: the *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (*Miscellaneous Observations*) and the *Politische Aphorismen* (*Political Aphorisms*) respectively. Part One concludes

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<sup>2</sup> Translated into English as: *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das allgemeine Brouillon*, editor and trans. David W. Wood (Albany N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007), abbreviated as RE, followed by page number.

<sup>3</sup> Translated into English: Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, editor and translator Jane Kneller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) abbreviated as FS, followed by page number.

with two distinct groups of works: section VI collects together various fragments and studies that could be generically defined as “aesthetics.” Here the *Logological Fragments* and the *Teplitz Fragments* particularly stand out. The last section contains two texts in which the fragment form gives way to the dialogical form (*Dialogues and Monologue*). Chronologically, we have now arrived at the year 1799, but the reflections leading to these texts take place in a short and intensive span of time. This period overlaps, if not with regard to the writing, then certainly with respect to the conception of the texts for the *Allgemeines Brouillon*, to which the majority of Part Two of the volume is devoted.

It hardly needs to be recalled that the publication of the *Fichte Studies* in Germany initiated a new approach to Novalis’s texts. The groundbreaking works of Manfred Frank (*Unendliche Annäherung*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1997<sup>4</sup>, and above all *Selbstgefühl*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 2002) form a focal point of this inflection, not to mention the other scholars who have likewise made use of these materials in the historical-critical edition (e.g. Bernhard Loheide, *Fichte und Novalis*, Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2000). No doubt Violetta Waibel’s long-awaited text, *System der Systemlosigkeit* (System of Systemlessness), will inaugurate a new stage in the reception of Novalis. The second part of her study especially announces a “philosophical-systematic commentary on Friedrich von Hardenberg’s ‘Fichte Studies’ (*Ein philosophisch-systematischer Kommentar der ‘Fichte-Studien’ Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, forthcoming Paderborn, Schöningh).

Granted, we can find a number of theoretically relevant attempts at reading Hardenberg’s philosophy prior to the historical-critical edition, e.g. Theodor Haering, *Novalis als Philosoph*, Kohlhammer 1954. But in these earlier studies Novalis’s thought was often associated with a very vague idea of romanticism and a “magical” version of the Fichtean ego or I. However, these conceptions take on a completely different character when seen in the light of the text of Novalis’s *Fichte Studies*, as well as his annotations to Kant and Hemsterhuis. In fact, “romanticizing the world” and “identifying the lower self with a better self” (SF 105, 391; HKA II 105, 545) constitute a process in the contemporary development of the I and the world. They are underpinned by a dialectic that can be understood by means of Novalis’s elaboration of the categories of the I and Not-I found in Fichte’s first Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*. In the same way, Novalis’s well-known “magical idealism” would now be free of an ambiguous hypertrophism of the I, in line with

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<sup>4</sup> Partially translated into English as: Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. Elizabeth Millán (Albany N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2003).

interpretations that emphasize its absolute transforming power (for instance, Julius Evola, *L'idealismo magico*, Roma 1925; Genova 1989, p. 148; but here without the manipulation of this power in a philosophical-political context).

In the 1798/99 *Allgemeines Brouillon*, which was therefore written after the *Fichte Studies*, the transformation of the internal into the external, and *ordo inverso*, thoughts into the world and vice-versa, is defined as the genuine operation of the “magical idealist” (SF 338, 760; HKA III 338, 301). But is it possible to understand the concept of the *Brouillon*'s idealism without reference to Fichte (and Spinoza) made for the first time in the *Fichte Studies*? Needless to say: these are always categories that are continually re-worked, phagocytized, then become partly outdated, but still remain in a dialectical tension so that we furthermore have to proceed by means of a logarithmization; to do so, however, the elements of this operation must become known.

Another example forms the transition to the Part Two of the volume, of which the *Allgemeines Brouillon* takes up a large part. In *Faith and Love* Novalis attributes a symbolic role to the monarchy (“the mystical sovereign” SF 15, 349; HKA II, 15, 487), and the famous formulation “instead of the Not-I – You” in the *Allgemeines Brouillon* (SF 820, 876; HKA III 820, 430; RE 151) is only understandable if we once again take into account its Fichtean context – and transformation. Novalis notes in the margin of his Fichte commentary: “Thus philosophy is – sophistic of the I – transcendental *image* of our consciousness” (SF 46, 95; HKA II 46, 136, FS 34). It is a question of thinking about the I's capacity to surpass itself in order to realize its transcendental self: “I *am not* insofar as I posit myself, but rather insofar as I sublimate myself” (*aufheben*, in the Hegelian sense *avant la lettre*; I prefer it here to Moretti's “annulling”, SF 278, 148; HKA II 278, 196; FS 93). The movement of self-estrangement *in nuce* in the *Fichte Studies*, reappears as the concept of self-alienation in *Pollen* (*Selbstentäußerung*, SF 26, 306; HKA II 26, 422), and then two years later it grounds the transition from the “Not-I” to the “You” in the *Allgemeines Brouillon*. Novalis engages with this concept in multiple contexts, because it is the basis for the *education* (*Bildung*) of the world as a mission entrusted to human beings (SF 32, 308; HKA II 32, 426). It is therefore crucial to have access to these various writings in an almost synoptic format, even if the construction of the framework of references is not without risks. I will now discuss this briefly with regard to Part Two of the volume.

**Part Two: the *Allgemeines Brouillon* and the Problem of a Projection of the *Fichte Studies* onto the Later Works (edited by Fabrizio Desideri)**

The most important group of writings in Part Two are the already mentioned “materials for an encyclopaedia” of the *Allgemeines Brouillon* (section IX), which is preceded by the *Freiberg Natural Scientific Studies* (section VIII). Further studies with a mainly scientific and technical character reappear in the last two sections of the volume (XII and XIII). Between these collections of fragments, we find in chronological order the glosses to Schlegel’s *Ideas* (section X) and *Christianity or Europe* (section XI). Hence, Part Two of the Italian edition presents the writings of the German historical-critical edition that are found in *Das philosophische Werk 2* (1968, revised 1984).

Interpreting the works written since the year 1796 as merely a development of the topics treated in the *Fichte Studies* does not suffice to explain the evolution of Novalis’s thought. Inversely, *Pollen*, the *Teplitz Fragments*, and even *Christianity or Europe*, or the *Brouillon*, would lack an essential theoretical plot if the *Fichte Studies* were not considered. This does not mean that every single topic in the *Fichte Studies* is taken up or developed later; but their mere presence in the texts makes it possible for us to trace a number of paths that can justifiably be called immanent with respect to Novalis’s thought. Take for example the acknowledged admiration for Spinoza and Fichte in the *Fichte Studies*: “Spinoza ascended as far as nature – Fichte to the I, or the person. I [ascend] to the thesis God” (SF 151, 114; HKA II 151, 157; FS 55). In the *Allgemeines Brouillon*, Novalis then adds Plotinus to those two references; Plotinus is singled out as the supreme synthesis of a dialectic between the immanence and transcendence of nature, God and the I, and even of realism and critical idealism (SF 924, 894; HKA II, 924, 445). Only by taking into account a work on the dialectical relationship between the I and its origin, between the I and nature in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, is it possible to understand the way in which Novalis analyses Neoplatonism in the entries in the *Romantic Encyclopaedia*. The reference point of the *Fichte Studies* therefore offers the possibility of recognizing paths, whether they are explicitly mentioned, or more undertaken in a hidden manner. The form of Novalis’s writing has certainly contributed to the arbitrariness of previous editions, since the fragment offers a radical hermeneutic opening and forces one to look for order.

From the very first edition of his writings in 1802, edited by Friedrich Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck, it is clear how this radical openness can also represent a weakness: one seeks a completion of the fragment by projecting the form of the exposition back on to its own content. The result was the image of an (early) romantic genius whose work first and foremost still



needed to be “ordered.” In 1908 Hermann Friedemann (Bong, Leipzig) even published an edition of Novalis’s writings that presented the fragments of the *Allgemeines Brouillon* according to categories extrinsic to the work, for example: *persönliche, philosophische (!), psychologische, anthropologische, religiöse...ästhetische (!) Fragmente*. The Italian editions tended in a similar direction, both the edition of G. A. Alfero and Vincenzo Errante (Milan 1942) and the one edited by Enzo Paci with Ervino Pocar’s translation (first in 1948 for the Istituto Editoriale Italiano, then Rizzoli 1976 and again in 1981). There have also been compilations of Novalis’s texts into small breviaries of spiritual salvation (Novalis, *Das Amen des Universums*, Theine & Peitsch, Bad Oeynhausen 1947) or interpretations elevating him to a prophet (Rudolf Meyer, *Novalis. Das Christus-Erlebnis und neue Geistes-offenbarung*, Urachhaus, Stuttgart 1939). Admittedly, taken separately, some fragments or groups of fragments, not to mention the poetic works, seem to suggest a reading in this vein. But Novalis’s writings are like a kaleidoscope: even where the context of the groups in which they take on a shape is well defined or those writings that were already published during his life time (*Pollen*, and *Faith and Love* for example), or where the writing abandons the form of the fragment to become an essay, prose, or fairytale (*Christianity or Europe*), it is simply a question of shaking up a little some of the elements and the form of the picture completely changes. The historical-critical edition, and likewise these texts edited by Moretti and Desideri, reveal how certain readings are more plausible than others, allowing us to recognize the developmental lines of the text. In short, it is a matter of recognizing the signs, of knowing how to read the residual traces. The importance of an *ars combinatoria* (according to Desideri in his beautiful introduction to the *Brouillon*, SF 687) is a key figure in Part Two that contains the large fragment collection of the *Brouillon*: it is a key figure not just for the writer, but also for the reader.

The above-mentioned 1799 essay *Christianity or Europe* represents somewhat of a stylistic break. This later text presents a historical overview of a magnificent spiritual harmony from the period of the middle ages down to the epoch of the author. At times the narrative continues with a fairy-tale character and does not seem to have much affinity with the hermeneutic topic of the fragment and with Novalis’s system of systemlessness, which again is already announced in the *Fichte Studies*:

An authentic philosophical system must systematize freedom and infinity, or, to express it more strikingly, it must systematize systemlessness (SF 648, 226) (*Das eigentliche Philosophische System muß Freiheit und Unendlichkeit, oder, um es auffallend auszudrücken, Systemlosigkeit, in ein System gebracht, seyn*, HKA II, 648, 288-89; FS 187).

Yet the *Christianity or Europe* text is the best example of the integration of the different areas of knowledge on which Novalis was working at the time: the text describes the historical emergence with an alternation of epochs deploying the categories of crystallization and dissolution so that the epochs become concretions of historical matter (“we are now standing high enough [...] to recognize in those strange follies the remarkable crystallizations of historical matter”, SF 957; HKA III 520). Religious, cultural and historical contexts (Reformation, Enlightenment, French Revolution) are movements of estrangement from and a rapprochement to a (utopian) spiritual golden age (“true anarchy is the generating element of religion. From the annihilation of everything positive, it raises up its glorious head as the new founder of the world”, SF 955; HKA III 517). What is the measure of the happiness of an era? – The communication between the scattered members of its body: this same figure is applicable to the *Allgemeines Brouillon* and in fact to all of Novalis’s philosophical speculation. Similarly, in order to overcome what is now crystallized, the different contexts must be put into communication with each other and this becomes possible if a micro-macrocosmic system of references is assumed.

We catch a glimpse of ourselves *as an element* in the system ... Naturally, we only understand everything foreign by making ourselves foreign – by varying ourselves – and by observing ourselves (SF 820, 876) (*Selbstfremdmachung - Selbstveränderung – Selbstbeobachtung*, HKA III 820, 429; RE 151).

The two sides of the question: the micro-macrocosmic system and the corresponding self-overcoming that is included in this concept of self-transformation are elements of a tension present in all of Novalis’s production. Symbolically we find this motif in the initiation novel *The Disciples at Sais*. Unfortunately, this short story is omitted from the present Morcelliana volume, because it is in the first volume of the German historical-critical edition that also contains the poems and *Henry of Ofterdingen*.

On the other hand, given the rather imposing format of this single volume with its 1183 pages of texts and introductions, another twenty pages of bibliography, and a further fifty pages of indexes (subject and name), it would have been hardly possible to incorporate any new materials. But in order to understand a number of passages, it would perhaps have been useful to have included in addition to the two initiation stories mentioned above at least several of Novalis’s letters. From a symbolic point of view, it would also be interesting to have a translation of the short poem *Astralis*, which belongs

to *Henry of Ofterdingen*, and has been in print for a while now (Sophia Vietor, *Astralis von Novalis*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2001). Perhaps it is legitimate to hope for a future parallel edition to the “philosophical” writings that would include the prose and poetical works, along with a selection of letters (for example, the letters to Friedrich Schlegel, based on the edition edited by Max Preitz as early as 1957, *Friedrich Schlegel und Novalis*, WBG, Darmstadt). This would make it possible to connect some of the fundamental aspects of Novalis’s early romanticism with his contemporary Friedrich Hölderlin. (In that regard, two editions of Hölderlin’s correspondence have recently been published in Italian: *Epistolario. Lettere e dediche*, edited by Gianni Bertocchini, Ariete: Milan 2015; and *Prose, teatro e lettere*, edited by Luigi Reitani, Mondadori: Milan 2019).

In any event, the *Scritti filosofici*, published by Morcelliana and edited and translated by Fabrizio Desideri and Giampiero Moretti, are not only a precious instrument for reading the philosophy of Novalis but also for exercising our insight into and interpretation of the signs of a universal community.

Everything must interpenetrate everything else,  
 The one has to flourish and ripen through the other,  
 Each thing must represent itself in everything,  
 By becoming intermingled with it.

Alles muß in einander greifen,  
 Eins durch das Andre gedeihn und reifen,  
 Jedes in Allen dar sich stellt,  
 Indem es sich mit ihnen vermischet.

(Novalis, *Astralis*)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In: Vietor, cit., p. 130, V. 65-68. This review essay was translated from the Italian by David W. Wood.



# Symphilosophie

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## Nouvelles lectures philosophiques de l'imagination

À propos de *The Imagination in German Idealism  
and Romanticism*

*Laure Cahen-Maurel\**

**Gerad Gentry, Konstantin Pollok (eds.), *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 267. ISBN 978-1-107-19770-1 (Hardback).**

La conceptualisation philosophique de l'imagination, dans l'usage moderne du concept, doit beaucoup à Kant. Le philosophe de Königsberg s'est attaché à éclairer le fonctionnement « aveugle mais indispensable (*blind, obgleich unentbehrlich*) » (CRP, A78/B103) de sa puissance productrice, son rôle dans la constitution de la connaissance et sa capacité à construire le réel autant qu'à produire l'irréel. Cette reconnaissance philosophique de l'imagination a fortement influencé les successeurs immédiats de Kant, idéalistes et romantiques. Ils ont perçu dans cette faculté de synthèse un des outils avec lesquels travailler pour parachever le système de la philosophie, dont Kant, selon la formule désormais célèbre de Schelling dans une lettre à Hegel de 1795, n'avait donné que les « résultats » sans fournir les « prémisses ». Il n'y a donc rien d'étonnant à voir le collectif de onze textes dirigé par Gerad Gentry et Konstantin Pollok, *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*, reprendre à partir du point de départ kantien (Partie I) l'histoire du développement du concept d'imagination tel qu'il traverse les philosophies postkantienne, d'abord idéalistes (Partie II), puis romantiques (Partie III). Ce faisant, le volume adopte une structure pour ainsi dire arborescente : Kant est la source principale de cette philosophie de l'imagination (ses racines ou le tronc), dont idéalisme et romantisme – on verra plus loin à quels égards –

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\* Docteur en philosophie, Membre Associé du Centre Victor Basch, Sorbonne Université, 1 rue Victor Cousin, 75005 Paris, France – laurecm2004@yahoo.fr

sont présentés comme les deux branches. Fichte et Hegel du côté de l'idéalisme, Friedrich Schlegel et Schleiermacher du côté du romantisme, sur lequel Herder vient se greffer, sont les figures retenues parmi les ramifications diverses de cette pensée de l'imagination dont l'introduction générale du livre rend compte. Gerad Gentry, qui signe cette longue introduction, souligne ainsi la signification et la portée générale de l'imagination, telle qu'elle rapproche idéalistes et romantiques de Kant par-delà les différences (parfois fondamentales) d'orientation.

Toutefois, il ne s'agit pas à proprement parler d'une approche historique pure et simple. Cet ouvrage ne se contente pas de procéder à une série de reconstructions de points cardinaux sur fond de problèmes d'interprétation soulevés dans la littérature secondaire. C'est un des grands mérites du livre que de vouloir aussi réhabiliter une imagination philosophiquement bien comprise. Ou du moins prise au sérieux. Autrement dit, de montrer en quoi l'imagination concerne la raison et la discipline philosophique elle-même, indépendamment ou en deçà de l'intérêt plus transversal que son rôle dans la formation des croyances et imaginaires sociaux peut avoir pour les sciences sociales, ou sa part dans la création de fictions pour les études littéraires et artistiques. Plus spécifiquement, il s'agit aussi, pour Gerad Gentry et Konstantin Pollok, de montrer en quoi l'imagination devrait intéresser davantage un certain usage contemporain de la philosophie – dit « analytique » – dans le monde anglophone. Les remarques introductives sur le siècle « de silence » philosophique (p. 17-18) que l'imagination viendrait de traverser demanderaient toutefois à être nuancées. Elles omettent, entre autres, toute une tradition de la philosophie francophone du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, allant de Bachelard à Ricoeur en passant par Simondon et Castoriadis.

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Quatre contributions sont réunies dans la première partie consacrée à la source kantienne, c'est-à-dire à la définition de l'imagination transcendante dans sa double nature, mi-sensible, mi-intelligible, homogène à la fois aux phénomènes et aux catégories de l'entendement. Les quatre articles de cette première partie cherchent surtout à caractériser l'activité de synthèse propre à l'imagination transcendante et ses différents rôles. Sont ainsi interrogés les liens opératoires qui se créent *a priori* – si l'on suit Kant – entre l'imagination et l'expérience (Clinton Tolley), la temporalité (Tobias Rosefeldt), la coopération entre la sensibilité et l'entendement (Günter Zöllner), ou encore les différents usages de la raison, eu égard à la portée plus

globale de l'imagination pour une compréhension profonde de l'expérience humaine (Keren Gorodeisky).

La théorie de l'imagination, telle qu'elle est présentée dans la *Critique de la raison pure*, avec ses deux variantes, d'une édition à l'autre, est particulièrement complexe. Clinton Tolley et Tobias Rosefeldt entrent dans cette complexité s'agissant notamment de caractériser le rôle de « synthèse figurative » que l'imagination transcendantale a pour l'intuition pure – rôle qui a fait, récemment, l'objet d'un débat intense<sup>1</sup>. La lecture de Clinton Tolley, dans « Kant on the Role of the Imagination (and Images) in the Transition from Intuition to Experience », offre un juste milieu entre deux tendances interprétatives opposées. Le premier type d'interprétation n'attribue à l'imagination qu'un rôle minimal (sinon inexistant) dans la formation de l'expérience, au motif que Kant se serait sinon heurté au problème d'une appréhension seulement « indirecte » des objets de l'expérience, où une médiation – une image ou représentation – s'interposerait entre la chose et mon esprit. Le second type d'interprétation confère au contraire une portée maximale à l'imagination en étendant son rôle à la production originale d'intuitions, dès les prémices de la constitution de l'expérience, au motif que l'intuition doit comporter une composante intellectuelle. Pour C. Tolley, l'apport essentiel de l'imagination est d'introduire dans le rapport de l'esprit à la chose, en tant qu'objet de l'expérience, la transition que constitue la perception (*Wahrnehmung*) comme acte mental intermédiaire entre l'intuition et l'expérience. La synthèse de l'imagination interviendrait donc, selon la thèse proposée, non *pas en-deçà*, mais seulement *au-delà* ou *après* l'intuition : elle rendrait « la perception possible en agissant sur des intuitions *déjà formées* pour faire naître la *conscience* de ces intuitions, plutôt que les intuitions elles-mêmes » (p. 29, ma traduction).

Tobias Rosefeldt, dans « Kant on Imagination and the Intuition of Time », reprend, lui, la question de la synthèse figurative, donc de la part de l'imagination dans la production des intuitions, sous l'angle temporel, là où le commentaire kantien privilégie d'ordinaire l'intuition *a priori* de l'espace. T. Rosefeldt analyse ainsi avec une grande minutie un trait essentiel du kantisme selon lequel le temps se trouve contenu dans toute représentation empirique du divers. Il se donne, en cela, les moyens de comprendre la spécificité de la synthèse figurative de l'imagination transcendantale dans son élaboration proprement temporelle. Même si, pour Kant, saisir intuitivement

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<sup>1</sup> Voir les références données par Tobias Rosefeldt dans sa propre contribution sur « Kant on Imagination and the Intuition of Time », p. 64.

le flux du temps suppose de le spatialiser – de lui conférer une extension spatiale en se le représentant par l'activité de tracer une ligne droite –, il y a dans le travail de l'imagination inhérent à l'intuition pure du temps l'articulation de deux niveaux de synthèse. Intuitionner le temps, ce n'est pas seulement synthétiser et ramener des parties à un tout. Intuitionner le temps, c'est aussi appréhender les parties comme s'articulant selon une succession, lier successivement les parties les unes aux autres pour finir ainsi par créer le tout. Cela permet de comprendre que l'intuition *a priori* du temps n'est pas simplement l'observation d'un contenu apparaissant à notre conscience, qui nous serait immédiatement présent, mais bien le *produit* de notre activité imaginative. La temporalité de nos représentations du monde se fait donc *dans et par* l'imagination.

Avec la contribution de Günter Zöllner, « “The Faculty of Intuitions *A Priori*.” Kant on the Productive Power of the Imagination », on s'élève à une réflexion plus générale sur le positionnement instable de l'imagination, entre sensibilité et entendement. L'article élargit la perspective en prenant en considération, outre la première *Critique*, l'*Anthropologie d'un point de vue pragmatique*, afin de revenir sur la relation fonctionnelle d'homogénéité ou d'affinité – l'*Anthropologie* fait des affinités chimiques une métaphore de la synthèse de l'imagination productrice – que l'imagination entretient d'un côté avec l'entendement, de l'autre avec la sensibilité. Traitement fonctionnaliste du statut de l'imagination s'oppose ici à lecture substantialiste : il permet d'éviter l'écueil de retomber dans l'ancienne psychologie dogmatique d'un soi ou d'une âme substantiels, mais aussi d'évacuer les difficultés énigmatiques où la pensée du statut de l'imagination en termes plus substantiels achoppe. L'article a, en cela, l'intérêt de chercher à démystifier l'image – trompeuse selon G. Zöllner et néanmoins tenace, car en apparence corroborée par la « lettre » de la première *Critique* – de l'imagination comme unité originaire des facultés cognitives de l'esprit humain, dans laquelle les deux sources hétérogènes de la connaissance, sensibilité et entendement, prendraient obscurément racine. Dépouillant le pouvoir producteur de l'imagination tel que Kant le conçoit des rôles de fondation ou de médiation entre le fini et l'infini qu'il a pu cristalliser après lui, dans les systèmes de Fichte, Schelling ou Hegel en particulier, Günter Zöllner rappelle en effet que chez Kant, c'est la *séparation originaire* de l'intuition et de l'entendement – manifestation essentielle de la finitude humaine – qui rend nécessaire le travail de l'imagination. Avec la notion spécifique d'imagination productrice, Kant placerait alors au cœur de son épistémologie un autre mode de congruence entre sensibilité et entendement, qui n'est ni une réduction de la dualité à l'unicité d'une « racine



commune, mais inconnue de nous » (*CRP*, A15/B29), qui sous-tendrait la division, ni une conciliation dialectique de la dualité moyennant un troisième terme distinct. Au contraire, le produit neuf de l'imagination *résulterait* du mélange des deux « éléments » ou sources, sensibilité et entendement, en tant que leur *composé*. Loin de pouvoir être absolutisée, l'imagination doit s'appuyer sur les données particulières (pures ou empiriques) de la sensibilité qu'elle fixe et synthétise en un tout – une image –, comme elle doit inversement s'appuyer sur les formes générales de l'entendement et sur sa spontanéité et force directrice pour être, plus qu'une simple réceptivité ou capacité passive (*Fähigkeit*) de perception, une faculté active (*Vermögen*) d'intuitions.

L'originalité de la contribution de Günter Zöllner n'est pas tant qu'elle rend ainsi compte du positionnement de l'imagination *entre* les deux facultés-sources de toute connaissance, mais qu'elle différencie chez Kant l'imagination « productrice » d'une imagination dite « créatrice » (p. 80-81) – distinction qui, pour le noter au passage, disparaît chez Fichte, lequel utilise souvent indifféremment les deux adjectifs<sup>2</sup>. La métaphore épigénétique de la « production » ou génération est partie intégrante de ce réseau métaphorique associant, aussi bien dans la *Critique de la raison pure* que dans l'*Anthropologie d'un point de vue pragmatique*, imagination, chimie et biologie. Si on accepte d'en tirer toutes les implications conceptuelles, la métaphore soulignerait le fait que l'imagination dans l'épistémologie kantienne est productrice plutôt que créatrice : l'imagination ne formerait pas une synthèse originale en partant de rien, elle ne serait pas création *ex nihilo*, mais le développement en une forme nouvelle de dispositions contenues virtuellement dans la double source dont elle est tributaire.

Tout aussi original est l'élargissement de la perspective auquel procède à son tour Keren Gorodeisky, dans « Unity in Variety : Theoretical, Practical, and Aesthetic Reason in Kant », de la question de l'unification des deux sources hétérogènes de la connaissance à celle de l'unification des trois usages hétérogènes, théorique, pratique et esthétique, de la raison. Selon l'auteure, l'imagination serait l'élément commun entre ces usages de la raison considérés par Kant d'ordre et de nature essentiellement différents, distinctement normés, constitués respectivement par un acte spécifique,

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<sup>2</sup> Voir notamment Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794/95), § 4, in *J. G. Fichte-Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, éd. Reinhard Lauth, Hans Gliwitzky, Erich Fuchs, Peter K. Schneider, Günter Zöllner *et al.*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann-Holzboog, 1962-2012, vol. I/2, éd. Reinhard Lauth et Hans Jacob, 1969, p. 353 et 414.

assentiment (ou croyance), intention (ou détermination des fins de l'agir), sentiment (de plaisir ou de déplaisir). Cette série d'usages de la raison n'en serait pas moins homogène en ce qu'elle se rapporte à un même principe de légalité transcendantale, et donc universelle ; à une même dimension imaginative de mise en forme du particulier en fonction de lois.

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La deuxième partie de l'ouvrage (« The Imagination in Post-Kantian German Idealism ») s'ouvre par un article de Johannes Haag, « Imagination and Objectivity in Fichte's Early *Wissenschaftslehre* », qui nous ramène à la question du rôle de l'imagination dans la constitution de l'objet de l'expérience, traitée en première partie par Clinton Tolley à propos de l'épistémologie kantienne. Car tel est, pour Johannes Haag, le paradoxe que toute philosophie transcendantale doit assumer et dont elle se doit de rendre raison, à savoir : qu'en est-il de l'objet si le concept d'objet ne peut que découler de celui de sujet ? Ou, pour reprendre les termes de J. Haag paraphrasant le problème tel qu'on le trouve formulé pour la première fois chez Salomon Maimon : « comment une philosophie peut-elle d'un côté valider une référence à des objets censés exister indépendamment de toute expérience subjective [...] et, d'un autre côté, soutenir qu'il n'y a ultimement rien d'autre que l'activité d'un sujet percevant pour fournir un fondement à la référence à un objet ? » (p. 109, ma traduction). La solution fichtéenne de ce paradoxe passe – comme chez Kant – par une exacte appréciation du rôle de l'imagination. Johannes Haag étudie ainsi de manière extrêmement pointue l'acte de synthèse originaire que Fichte, dans la « Déduction de la représentation » qui constitue le cœur de la quatrième section de l'*Assise fondamentale de la Doctrine de la science (Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre, 1794/95)*, attribue à l'imagination productrice en termes d'interaction entre le Moi et le Non-Moi. L'imagination, ici, est toutefois plus qu'une instance « médiatrice » se tenant entre le réel et l'idéal ou le sensible et l'intelligible : elle est le « médium » spatio-temporel des interactions du Moi avec le Non-Moi en tant que substances, le fondement de leur réalité concrète, la condition même de l'entrée du Moi ou de l'esprit dans le temps. De par son « flottement » indéterminé (*Schweben*) entre les opposés, c'est-à-dire sa présence vivante et agissante en-deçà de la logique, du concept et de la division sujet/objet, l'imagination est en effet ce pouvoir synthétique qui fait se rencontrer et s'entrechoquer ce que l'intellect sépare ; et confère, ce faisant, une limite concrète à chacun des deux termes absolus et mutuellement exclusifs en soi (abstraitement). Selon Johannes Haag, qui

se démarque ainsi de la position de Günter Zöllner, l'analyse fichtéenne du pouvoir de l'imagination s'aligne en cela parfaitement avec « l'esprit » du kantisme.

Cette filiation kantienne, les deux articles suivants cherchent également à la faire ressortir de la conceptualisation hégélienne de l'imagination. Meghant Sudan, dans « The Kantian Roots of Hegel's Theory of the Imagination », dresse un parallèle entre les réflexions sur l'imagination de la première *Critique* de Kant et le traitement que Hegel fait de l'imagination dans l'*Encyclopédie des sciences philosophiques* sous l'appellation de « psychologie ». Ce rapprochement, Meghant Sudan le considère justifié au sens où ces « deux théories de l'imagination s'investissent de la même façon dans la tâche de suivre la piste de la conscience de soi, jusqu'à rendre compte d'une subjectivité intégrée » (p. 129, ma traduction) ; autrement dit, d'une forme de subjectivité intégrant dans un tout réceptivité et réflexion. Gerad Gentry réexamine pour sa part l'importance reconnue par Hegel de la troisième ou dernière *Critique* de Kant, la *Critique de la faculté de juger*. D'après Gerad Gentry, Hegel aurait tiré directement de la manière dont Kant y traite du thème de l'imagination comme « libre légalité » et « finalité sans fin » le principe spéculatif pur, soit la structure logique par où la raison absolue se fonde elle-même comme auto-détermination dialectique. Ce chapitre vise à prolonger certains passages de l'introduction générale du volume (sections 2.3. et 3.4. de l'introduction).

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Consacrée au romantisme allemand, la troisième partie, enfin, envisage l'imagination sous deux angles complémentaires : herméneutique et poétique ou, plus largement, artistique. Avec « Imagination and Interpretation : Herder's Concept of *Einfühlung* », Michael N. Forster met directement en cause l'anti-psychologisme de la philosophie du langage anglo-saxonne contemporaine, inspirée de Wittgenstein, pour tenter de montrer avec Herder la portée décisive de l'imagination empathique comme élément d'une méthode herméneutique. L'*Einfühlung* imaginative a chez Herder (dans *Une autre philosophie de l'histoire* notamment) un rôle heuristique pour la compréhension générale de l'histoire et du langage. Cette réflexion sur la portée gnoséologique du concept herdérien d'*Einfühlung* (l'empathie) nous fait sortir du transcendantalisme et de la philosophie spéculative au profit d'une démarche empiriste ramenant la philosophie abstraite et désincarnée, globalisante ou surplombante, à une anthropologie tenant compte d'un ensemble de vécus de conscience particuliers (sensations, sentiments, autant

que jugements) et d'une pluralité d'expériences individuelles, situées et dispersées à travers les époques historiques, entièrement distinctes d'un individu à l'autre. Le rapport empathique par où l'imagination me met en relation avec autrui, bien loin de n'être qu'une projection de soi sur l'autre, me permettrait une connaissance intègre de ce qui est ou a été immédiatement présent à autrui – les « images » qu'il a vues, ce qu'il a ressenti ou s'est représenté. L'*Einfühlung* imaginative donnerait accès, ce faisant, à un contenu de conscience sans pour autant être un vécu de conscience, au sens où ce contenu serait mien, serait un moment de ma propre vie intérieure (p. 187).

Ces considérations sur l'empathie et l'imagination chez Herder introduisent à la réflexion de Kristin Gjesdal : « Imagination, Divination, and Sympathy : Schleiermacher and the Hermeneutics of the Second Person ». K. Gjesdal y débat de l'interprétation par Gadamer de l'herméneutique schleiermachérienne du « je » et du « tu ». Gadamer a été l'un des premiers critiques de l'herméneutique romantique et de l'irréductibilité de la seconde personne à une communauté, un contexte ou une tradition culturels. Selon Kristin Gjesdal, Gadamer a pourtant tort d'attribuer à Schleiermacher une « romantisation » ou esthétisation de la compréhension qui reposerait sur l'idée non critique d'une « congénialité », en dehors de toute méthode herméneutique. Ce n'est pas cette version supposée dénaturée des enseignements de la *Critique de la faculté de juger* kantienne qui a contribué à la formation de la théorie schleiermachérienne de l'herméneutique, mais la réception de l'empirisme herdérien, de sa conception de la portée herméneutique – au sens technique du terme – de la sympathie (ou empathie) comme forme de « divination » de l'esprit d'autrui. Bien comprise, cette méthode de divination imaginative, intersubjective, peut être, pour K. Gjesdal, une alternative philosophiquement valide à l'herméneutique gadamérienne, inspirée de la thèse hégéliano-heideggerienne de la préséance de la communauté sur l'individu.

L'ouvrage s'achève par une analyse de l'imagination romantique sous l'angle plus attendu de la poésie et de l'imagination symbolique telle qu'elle prend sens dans les pratiques artistiques. Alors que les développements sur l'empathie nous faisaient quitter le terrain du transcendantalisme et de la philosophie spéculative, Allen Speight analyse les points de convergence entre romantisme et idéalisme allemands en mettant en regard Friedrich Schlegel avec Hegel, dans la contribution finale au volume, intitulée « Art, Imagination, and the Interpretation of the Age : Hegel and Schlegel on the New Status of Art and Its Connection to Religion and Philosophy ». L'article consiste toutefois davantage en une réflexion générale sur le statut de l'art

qu'en une réflexion sur l'activité proprement dite de l'imagination esthétique et artistique.

Celle-ci fait l'objet de la contribution précédente. Dans « Poetry and Imagination in Fichte and the Early German Romantics : A Reassessment », Elizabeth Millán Brusslan revisite la question de l'héritage de la théorie fichtéenne du pouvoir de l'imagination dans la valorisation romantique de la poésie, laquelle s'accompagne réciproquement d'une poétisation de la philosophie. Le réexamen est fait à la lumière des travaux récents auxquels le débat autour de la place occupée par l'esthétique dans l'œuvre de Fichte a donné lieu dans la recherche (citons notamment les travaux de Claude Piché, Ives Radrizzani, Giorgia Cecchinato ou Daniel Breazeale). L'article d'Elizabeth Millán Brusslan marque une hésitation réelle, mais finit par rejoindre le camp des tenants d'une lecture du fichtéanisme selon laquelle la mise à l'écart supposée de toute considération esthétique ferait partie des attendus théoriques de cette doctrine, pour des raisons non pas purement circonstancielles, par conséquent, mais intrinsèques au système : « Pour d'autres (et cette position me tente encore), écrit E. Millán Brusslan, l'absence de théorie esthétique dans l'œuvre de Fichte est le résultat d'implications systématiques plus profondes qui excluaient le développement d'une théorie esthétique » (p. 213). Selon Elizabeth Millán Brusslan, l'objectif fichtéen de fonder la philosophie sur un principe premier absolument certain d'où se déduirait la totalité du savoir ne laisserait pas suffisamment de place à l'*espace entre*, l'espace de flottement, qui est l'espace même du libre jeu de l'imagination avec l'entendement, propre à l'inspiration poétique. C'est ce qui aurait été vivement reproché à Fichte dans les rangs des premiers romantiques allemands, par Friedrich Schlegel en particulier.

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Au terme de ce parcours, on peut donc dire que prendre l'imagination au sérieux, philosophiquement parlant, revient à cerner le rôle déterminant qu'elle joue dans les diverses formes de congruence de l'idéal avec le réel (et réciproquement). La manière dont on peut parler d'un objet en dehors d'un sujet, dont on intuitionne *a priori* le temps, ou encore la manière dont la réceptivité du sujet s'intègre à l'ordre de la réflexivité ; les liens qui se tissent entre deux individus leur permettant de se comprendre et de se parler ; l'animation et le jeu des facultés de l'esprit humain dans l'inspiration poétique – tels sont quelques-uns des exemples à partir desquels ce livre renouvelle et approfondit la réflexion philosophique sur le pouvoir de l'imagination. L'ouvrage montre utilement que cette convergence entre le

réel et l'idéal n'est pas forcément immédiatement harmonieuse, qu'une unité, artistique comme philosophique, ne se conquiert souvent qu'à partir du travail de la contradiction et de la tension.

Bien entendu, un tel ouvrage ne saurait traiter de manière exhaustive de tous les penseurs de l'imagination dans la philosophie allemande autour de 1800. Il est toutefois regrettable que les conceptions de deux représentants majeurs de l'idéalisme et du romantisme, Schelling et Novalis, ne fassent l'objet que de considérations marginales dans un volume spécifiquement consacré à la question de l'imagination dans ces mouvements. Certes, il est fait mention de Schelling dès les tout premiers mots de l'introduction, laquelle consacre par ailleurs un bref aperçu à l'importance de l'imagination esthétique chez Schelling (aux côtés d'autres personnalités clés de cette période, telles Hölderlin, Schiller et Goethe). Mais la philosophie schellingienne n'est malheureusement pas traitée plus en détail dans les contributions de cet ouvrage. Quant à la pensée de Novalis, elle constitue une véritable lacune du livre. Malgré ces réserves, nous sommes néanmoins d'accord avec les directeurs du volume pour dire que les études historiques et systématiques proposées par l'ouvrage forment une base et une introduction solides à un sujet souvent mal compris. Et il est particulièrement réjouissant de voir la tradition romantique prise en compte dans ces analyses, lorsque l'histoire de la philosophie ne l'intègre d'ordinaire qu'avec beaucoup de réticences.

C'est précisément la question de l'imagination comme point d'intersection entre l'idéalisme et le romantisme allemands qui recèle, à nos yeux, les potentialités les plus fécondes pour ouvrir à de nouvelles recherches. Une lecture s'efforçant de rendre compte du travail concret de l'imagination au sein du système de la raison devrait revenir à deux textes publiés par Fichte : l'*Assise fondamentale de la Doctrine de la science* de 1794/95 et l'écrit soi-disant populaire *Sur l'esprit et la lettre dans la philosophie* (1795-1800). Le premier texte a longtemps été regardé avant tout comme un texte purement spéculatif, tandis que le second a été largement négligé et philosophiquement sous-estimé en raison de sa nature populaire. Pourtant, il y a bien, selon nous, une place dans la philosophie fichtéenne pour l'art et pour la réflexion sur l'art<sup>3</sup> ; et même une place accordée spécifiquement aux arts particuliers dans

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<sup>3</sup> Voir Laure Cahen-Maurel, « The Monogram of the "Sweet Songstress of the Night" : The Hovering of the Imagination as the First Principle of Fichte's Aesthetics », *Fichte-Studien*, vol. 49, 2020 ; et aussi, au sujet de la convergence philosophique entre idéalisme et romantisme sur l'imagination, « Novalis's Magical Idealism : A Threefold Philosophy of the Imagination, Love and Medicine », *Symphilosophie. Revue internationale de philosophie romantique*, vol. 1, 2019, p. 129-165.

leur diversité, poésie, musique, sculpture, théâtre... Toutefois, cette imagination artistique est ce qu'il y a de *caché* dans le système fichtéen. Ce qui est strictement conforme à l'idée que Kant se fait de l'imagination en tant qu'« art caché (*verborgene Kunst*) dans les profondeurs de l'âme humaine » (*CRP*, B180), comme à sa caractérisation, déjà citée, du fonctionnement « aveugle mais indispensable » de sa puissance productrice, « sans laquelle nous n'aurions absolument aucune connaissance, mais dont nous ne prenons que rarement conscience » (*CRP*, A78/B103). Ce fonctionnement méconnu de l'imagination productrice est pointé explicitement par Fichte. Comme le relève ici Johannes Haag (voir p. 117), elle entre en scène dans la *Grundlage* de 1794 comme une faculté anonyme, sous la périphrase « le pouvoir le plus merveilleux du Moi ». C'est que l'imagination productrice travaille d'abord dans l'ombre en quelque sorte. Et que révéler ce qu'elle fait au grand jour suppose la performativité ou la pragmatique d'une imagination *en acte*. Autrement dit, pour pouvoir saisir à la fois l'activité de l'imagination et ses produits artistiques et philosophiques, il faut y mettre de sa propre imagination. On comprend alors que l'esthétique, chez Fichte, ne soit pas – à dessein – clairement exposée ou entièrement déduite en termes transcendants mais qu'elle soit, pour l'essentiel, une esthétique « en creux ». Une esthétique qu'un auteur romantique comme Novalis, s'employant à « fichtiser mieux que Fichte lui-même », ne fera que rendre plus explicite, en externalisant dans des œuvres et dans un style de philosophie plus poétiques le travail interne producteur, ou créateur, de l'imagination au sens fichtéen.





**Reviews**

**Recensions**

**Recensioni**

**Rezensionen**



# Symphilosophie

*International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism*

**Manja Kisner, Jörg Noller (eds.), *The Concept of Will in Classical German Philosophy. Between Ethics, Politics, and Metaphysics*, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2020, VI, 272 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-064912-3.**

This volume, which is the result of a conference in Munich in 2017, contains thirteen articles, all expounding the broad topic of the notion of “will” in classical German philosophy from Kant to Schelling and Schopenhauer. Most of the perspectives developed in this book are primarily concerned with questions of ethics and practical philosophy in general. However, this naturally implies discussions about the very foundations of theoretical thought and of metaphysical conceptions as well. In this regard, the close interrelation between the different disciplines of philosophy that is characteristic for classical German thought is adequately highlighted by this volume as a whole.

The book is divided into two main parts: the first one (7–85) deals exclusively with Kant’s practical philosophy. The second, more extensive part (89–262) offers a broad collection of studies on various post-Kantian thinkers, not only on the most famous representatives of German Idealism (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel), but also on some less popular, yet important authors (Reinhold, Maimon, Jacobi, Bouterwek). In the following review, some — not all — of the articles in the volume will be presented in a short, concise way.

Markus Kohl (29–48) argues that two different types of self-determination by rational beings can be identified in Kant’s ethics. Since no such thing as completely lawless freedom of action is possible in Kant’s moral philosophy, at least some kind of determination generally has to be included. While there is a model of “absolute unconditional necessity” that “excludes any form of contingency” (29), a second model “involves a form of contingency which entails alternative possibilities for determining oneself” (ibid.). In this case, “absolutely spontaneous intelligence is affected by sensible conditions whose influence inveighs against reason, which makes it contingent whether or not the agent acts in accordance with right reason” (41). Kohl identifies this type of self-determination as “executive freedom,” whereas the first type can be called “legislative freedom” (ibid.). This

important differentiation offers an effective way to approach Kant's theory. At the end of his consideration, Kohl discusses different "worries" that Kant's moral philosophy raises as soon as a contemporary "naturalistic worldview" (47) is taken into account, leading to the result that this worldview contradicts Kant's position. However, it does not become completely clear what these "worries" actually mean and imply on a systematic level.

Halla Kim (49–70) discusses the topic of the "will in the context of our moral failure" (49) according to Kant and compares his earlier conception of a "natural dialectics" in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* to his later "radical evil" in the *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. While the former conception appears to be a particular failure of the individual, the latter is rather a general failure of the human species. As Kim demonstrates, the problem of a natural dialectics (meaning that the will gets into conflict with itself, see 53) can be solved by Kant's general model of transcendental idealism (68). In contrast, the problem of humans falling into radical evil remains a mystery (58) and therefore requires redemption and religion (68). Kim thus manages to uncover an interesting development within Kant's practical philosophy between 1785 and 1793.

John Walsh (89–104) presents an important conception of early post-Kantian practical philosophy, namely Karl Leonhard Reinhold's theory of the free will. According to Reinhold, "free will" is "the capacity to choose for or against the moral law" (89). In contrast to Kant, freedom thus implies the possibility of acting against the moral law stated by practical reason. Reinhold thus puts an emphasis on *choice*. In order to defend Reinhold against common allegations of taking a merely psychologistic position, Walsh tries to show that, according to Reinhold, the mere fact of freedom in consciousness and the knowledge thereof *follow* from the consciousness of the moral law (93). Reinhold therefore rather adheres to Kant's moral philosophy on a methodological level than advocating a psychologistic position in the empiricist sense. With the dispute between Reinhold and Carl Christian Erhard Schmid (97 seqq.), who asserted "the doctrine of intelligible fatalism, i.e. that all actions are determined by intelligible causality" (97; "immoral action is the result of a hindrance of the efficacy of reason", *ibid.*), Walsh also highlights another important, but often overlooked discussion of the early post-Kantian era.

Amit Kravitz (105–123) compares the Kantian theory of the will to the one established by Salomon Maimon. As Kravitz shows, the starting point of Maimon's argumentation is the search for an observable natural driving-force ("Triebfeder") of morality, rather than an a priori principle. Maimon is hence

concerned with the factual reality of morality, based on the observation of human nature (114), instead of its general possibility. By stating that the drive to perfection of one's intellectual capacity and to the cognition of truth is *the* universally valid drive of human beings, Maimon indeed offers an alternative perspective on questions of moral philosophy: This drive to perfection can be applied to the will as well, and the satisfaction of this drive involves pleasure (117). Choosing a morally good will therefore pleases the individual, hence the motivational ground of this choice becomes comprehensible.

Ansgar Lyssy (159–180) presents the theory of the will developed by Friedrich Ludewig Bouterwek, who advocated a decisively realistic position in his debate on the philosophies of Kant and Fichte. In his *Apodiktik* (1799), Bouterwek states that the absolute in the sense of absolute reality has to be found outside of the subject of knowledge. The will, in the sense of a living force (172), can be directly experienced as the basis of one's own freedom and individuality, prior to the "I think." At the same time, external reality becomes apparent as a resistance against our will. Will as such therefore dissolves the abstract distinction between reality and thought and becomes the "Realprinzip" in Bouterwek's philosophy (174). At the end of his article, Lyssy equitably discusses the advantages and disadvantages of Bouterwek's philosophy in comparison with other systems of his time (176 seqq.).

Jörg Noller (181–201) aims to defend Schelling's theory of the will in his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809) against allegations of being an obscure "metaphysics of evil" (see 181). According to Noller, Schelling instead advocates a "critical voluntarism" (181) that is based on Kantian transcendental philosophy and offers a "real compatibilism" (194 seqq.) in the sense that nature makes freedom possible. Noller's study is followed by two articles on Hegel's complex theory of the will (Daniel Wenz, 203–225; Alex Englander, 227–246), mainly dealing with the *Science of Logic* and the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, respectively.

It is just one relatively small step from Bouterwek's position regarding the philosophical significance of the will and Schelling's apparently "dark sentence: 'Will is primal Being (*Ursein*)'" (194) to Schopenhauer's "World as Will," which is the topic of the concluding article by Jenny Bunker (247–262). Bunker uncovers three internal contradictions in Schopenhauer's philosophical system, which result from a conflict between this system's ethical and metaphysical aspects. These contradictions pertain to Schopenhauer's theories of compassion, asceticism, and salvation. According to Bunker, these systematic conflicts can be solved by assuming that the will in Schopenhauer's philosophy should not be considered as the "ultimate

reality” (not as the thing-in-itself in an absolute sense, but rather only relative to the world of phenomena, 254) and that there is indeed some kind of differentiation and individuation at the level of the will itself (257 seqq.). This offers a promising alternative perspective on Schopenhauer’s theory of the will and the “World as Will,” avoiding a one-sided reading of Schopenhauer’s position as radical monism.

The reviewed volume offers many different and important perspectives concerning one of the central notions in classical German philosophy, especially with regard to ethical issues. At the same time, it hints at interesting questions that are left open by this book and still have to be debated, e.g. the relation between Schelling’s and Schopenhauer’s conceptions of the will and their philosophies of nature, or a possible Spinozistic background — the conatus — in theories of the will in classical and post-classical philosophy, at least from Schelling and Schopenhauer to Nietzsche.

*Daniel Elon*

**Novalis, *À la fin tout devient poésie*, edited, translated, and introduced by Olivier Schefer, Paris: Editions Allia, 2020, 272 pp. ISBN 979-10-304-2252-8.**

This volume contains a new French translation of the unpublished notes and reflections of the young poet-philosopher Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) from the years 1799-1800. Originally collected together and published in German under the title “Fragmente und Studien” (Fragments and Studies), this volume presents, in over 700 fragments, the final philosophical and poetic thoughts of Novalis, since he died not long after on 25 March 1801, just short of his 29<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is wonderful to finally have this complete French translation by Olivier Schefer, presented in a beautiful edition and format by the Paris publisher Allia. The edition contains a wide-ranging introductory essay by Schefer entitled “Science, art et religion” (7-19), dozens of pages of highly informative endnotes (213-249), a subject and name index (251-258), and a brief bibliography (259-261). The book is a fitting third companion to the two other volumes of Novalis’s philosophical writings translated by Schefer for Allia: *Le Brouillon général* (2000, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2015), and *Semences* (2004). If they are grouped together with the 2012 French translation of Novalis’s *Fichte Studies* by Augustin Dumont, *Les Années d’apprentissage philosophique: Études fichtéennes, 1795-96* (Presses universitaires du Septentrion), the result is that virtually Novalis’s entire

philosophical œuvre is now available in French translation, with these volumes perfectly complementing the recent Italian edition of Novalis's philosophical texts, *Scritti filosofici*, translated and edited by Fabrizio Desideri and Giampiero Moretti (Morcelliana, 2019).<sup>1</sup>

But how are we to fruitfully read and understand these last thoughts and fragments? For the volume not only contains Novalis's most mature philosophical musings, but interspersed among them are highly personal jottings and diary entries: the latter include diverse notes about future literary plans (60, 157), with fragment number 534 projecting an entire collection of romances by "Novalis" (146), i.e. Hardenberg is clearly envisaging writing them under his adopted pseudonym; other short sketches for novels (141, 157); the draft of a wedding speech (68); miscellaneous lists of topics, books and vocabulary (60-66, 105); a brainstorming session for how to earn money (59); and multiple references to Hardenberg's domestic life with his second fiancée Julie von Charpentier (25, 54, 56, 140), including experiments with her on the possible medicinal benefits of magnetism and galvanism (89, 104-105).

In addition to these more personal diary entries, and in a clear extension of his 1798/99 encyclopaedia project, we also find in this volume a series of more technical scientific notebooks, replete with detailed observations on subjects like mathematics (76-78), physics (79-101), and medicine (102-142). Noteworthy too is the concluding longer meditation on "Le royaume du poète" (The kingdom of the poet), which compares the real and symbolic missions of the philosopher and the poet (211-212). And some of Novalis's most celebrated poetic-philosophical fragments are indeed to be found in this volume. For instance, fragment no. 65 (37): "La nature est une ville magique pétrifiée" (Nature is a magical petrified city); or fragment no. 130 (49): "L'homme est un soleil – ses sens sont ses planètes" (Man is a sun, and his senses are his planets), as well as fragment no. 182 (56), Novalis's plaidoyer extolling the benefits of exact scientific thinking over nebulous fantasy: "Je suis convaincu que l'on peut parvenir à de véritables révélations par un entendement technique et froid, un sens moral paisible, plutôt que par l'imagination [*Fantasie*] ..." (I am convinced that we can better attain *true revelations* by means of a sober, technical intellect, a tranquil moral sense, than through fantasy ...).

Giants in cultural history are deftly characterized, with Novalis famously designating Spinoza as "un homme ivre de Dieu" (a god-

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<sup>1</sup> See Giovanni Panno's review essay of this Italian edition in the present second issue of *Symphilosophie*.

intoxicated man) (153); Shakespeare impresses as a powerful soul with a meditative mind (43) and his poems and verse are favourably compared with Boccaccio and Cervantes (181). We can peer over Novalis's shoulder as he contemplates the possibility of having Jacob Böhme reappear at the end of his novel of the blue flower, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (184), and glimpse his plan to incorporate into the novel both true events from German history (188-190), and a reworked version of the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice as an inverted fairy tale (188). Novalis admits that this multi-layered and polysemic novel is deeply autobiographical: it recounts the story of a poet who loses his fiancée, just as Hardenberg had lost Sophie von Kühn (187). Thus, while simultaneously writing many of these fragments, notes, and studies, Novalis was hard at work on his two longer poetic stories and novels, *The Disciples at Sais* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Multiple preliminary sketches for these works are found in the section called "Les papiers de Berlin" (183-209). In his introductory essay, Olivier Schefer eloquently summarizes Novalis's late writing mood and manner of working:

Il est assez fascinant de voir à quel point chez Novalis tout se concentre, se ramasse, s'intensifie avec le temps. La douleur, comme la joie, le savoir comme la poésie. Ces derniers manuscrits en sont pour ainsi dire la plus parfaite expression. En les écrivant, il rêve, plume à la main, à son *Henri d'Ofterdingen*, roman romantique par excellence, empreint d'esprit médiéval et de sa lecture des textes ésotériques de Jacob Böhme. [...] dans le roman de la fleur bleue [...] Novalis entrecroise le christianisme médiéval (la joute des ménestrels et la quête du Saint Graal) aux légendes orphiques et hindoues, le monde devant s'achever en une transfiguration poétique du monde. (10, 18)<sup>2</sup>

Here one has to agree with Schefer's further suggestion (18-19) that these late fragments should be read in direct conjunction with the other parallel texts of the time; i.e. not just the poetic novels, but also the 1799 essay *Christianity or Europe*, and the 1800 text, *Hymns to the Night* – a lyrical cycle published in the romantic journal, the *Athenaeum*.

The fact that Novalis's writings are an *original* intellectual engagement with and direct response to the work of many of his contemporaries, some of

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<sup>2</sup> "It is rather fascinating to see how with Novalis everything becomes concentrated, collected and intensified over time. Suffering as well as joy, knowledge as well as poesy. These final manuscripts are, as it were, the most perfect expression of this. While writing them, quill in hand, he's dreaming of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the romantic novel par excellence, imbued with a medieval spirit and his reading of Jacob Böhme's esoteric texts. [...] In the novel of the blue flower [...] Novalis interweaves medieval Christianity (the jousting of the minstrels and the quest for the Holy Grail), with Orphic and Hindu legends, and the world ends through a poetic transfiguration of the world."



whom he personally knew, is repeatedly confirmed in these late fragments. However, it is still breath-taking to see *just how close a reader* he was of their works. That too is another fruitful method for understanding Novalis – to closely study and compare those works that he himself read and referenced. In this regard, we find that in the years 1799-1800 the philosopher J.G. Fichte still remains a focal point for the romantic thinker. Novalis highlights the crucial role of logic in the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* (29), and rightly surmises the deeper religious undercurrent of the *Wissenschaftslehre* as a practical application of Christianity (46). Jacobi in turn is criticized for lacking an artistic sense and therefore failing to understand Fichte (48), underscoring the vital aesthetic component of the Fichtean system. Both the aesthetic and religious dimensions of the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* are aspects only beginning to be acknowledged in modern Fichte research. In addition, we see Novalis inspired by the conclusion of Lessing’s *Education of the Human Race* about the possibility of writing a new gospel of the future (179), making plans to join forces with Tieck, Friedrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher to this end (26), while noting the latter’s idea of a *Kunstreligion* (33). On Novalis’s side at least, this daring poetic plan seems to have become partly fulfilled in the 1800 *Hymns to the Night*. Fragment no. 605 of this volume also contains an extended discussion of the history of philosophy as a “mysterious tradition”, in which Novalis remarks how Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* presupposes a limited concept of nature and philosophy, and poses the question about the true essence of Schelling’s system (174). Lastly, Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* is put under the microscope (42-43, 136, 146-147, 150); it is pictured as a sort of Voltairian *Candide* against poetry (147), with Novalis expressing the intention to write a polemic against Goethe (49).

It is worth recalling how this negative critique of *Wilhelm Meister* has led many scholars to primarily underscore the opposition between Novalis and Goethe, and therefore between romanticism and classicism, and to overlook the aesthetic harmony that is sometimes found between these two figures and currents. A striking example of one such harmony is Novalis’s idea of inverted fairy tale (188) mentioned above. This idea should be directly placed in the Goethean tradition, and highlights again what an incredibly close reader he was of Goethe. Novalis’s poem “Wenn Zahlen und Figuren” (German: 246; French: 187) – is referred to by Oliver Schefer as one of Novalis’s most famous poems, and he rightly recalls that it is now considered a classic of romantic poetry (245). This poem explicitly states that it is possible to see “true world histories” (*wahre Weltgeschichten*) in fairy tales and

poems (187, 246).<sup>3</sup> Where does Novalis find an example of this among his contemporaries? – In Goethe’s 1795 *Märchen* (Fairy Tale).<sup>4</sup> In 1798 Novalis had already classified this *Märchen* as a “erzählte Oper” (opéra raconté/narrated opera).<sup>5</sup> How is Goethe’s *Märchen* like an opera? Novalis does not elaborate, but many scholars now agree that it is a reference to *The Magic Flute* – Mozart’s opera of initiation into the Egyptian mysteries of Isis and Osiris. Besides other mystery religions, highly visible Egyptian elements are indeed present in Goethe’s *Märchen*, such as the circular image of the snake biting its own tail, the Egyptian symbol of eternity, and the concluding image of the hawk reflecting the rays of the sun, both of which are symbols of Osiris.<sup>6</sup>

Novalis’s also artistically refers to Goethe’s *Märchen* in the prefatory aphorisms to his 1799 published text *Glauben und Liebe* (Faith and Love), under the leitmotiv of the *Märchen* and the words of the Apocalypse: “The Time is at Hand” (Revelation 22:10).<sup>7</sup> This emphasises once more the extent to which Novalis’s last fragments need to be read in conjunction with his other writings from the same period, especially his published works. Here in this 1799 text Novalis gives a second inspired indication about Goethe’s *Märchen*. He writes that it is possible to detect “ancient dynasties” in it, and that we should seek to recognise the identity of the navigator or Ferryman, a figure in the tale.<sup>8</sup> Again, he does not elaborate further. However, the term “dynasty” could also refer to Egypt and the ancient dynasties of the royal pharaohs. Is Goethe’s 1795 text therefore an example of how a *Märchen* can contain “*wahre Weltgeschichte*”? I would argue that it is, and in line with these two indications of Novalis, I put forward the following interpretation relating it to the ancient dynasties of Egyptian history. On a purely artistic level, Goethe’s *Märchen* commences with an old Ferryman in his boat with two Will-o’-the-wisps, who are causing havoc on the high water. Later we learn

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<sup>3</sup> I am reading this in the literal sense of “*wahre Weltgeschichten*”. In his rendering of this poem (187), Schefer translates it into French as “les vraies cosmogonies” (true cosmogonies). This of course is a perfectly acceptable poetic translation, and he explains this choice in the endnotes insofar as the task of romantic poetry and fairy tales can also be rightly understood as revealing and recounting the origins of the world (245).

<sup>4</sup> J.W. von Goethe, “Märchen”, first published in 1795 in the journal *Die Horen*, Band 4, 10. Stück, 108-151.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Novalis, fragment 45 of “Poésie”, in: Novalis, *Semences*, translated by Olivier Schefer (Paris: Allia, 2004), p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> These interpretations can be found in two works by Goethe’s friend from Rome, Karl Philipp Moritz, *Die symbolische Weisheit der Aegypter* (Berlin: Karl Massdorff, 1793) p. 7; *Mythologisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin: Christian Gottfried Schöne, 1794), p. 367.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Novalis, “Fleurs”, *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>8</sup> Novalis, “Fleurs”, in: *Semences*, p. 95.

the Will-o'-the-wisps are gold plundering robbers. They attempt to escape payment to the old Ferryman, but he holds them fast, and subsequently they become helpers and protectors of the royal kingdom. Where do we find a specific example of this in the world historical dynasties of ancient Egypt? – In the battle of Ramesses II (Ramesses the Great, the Great Ancestor) with the Sherden sea pirates. Ramesses II was a Pharaoh of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, and the sea-pirates he defeated and captured ultimately became part of his personal guard. In fact, Goethe had elsewhere already telescoped this same Egyptian history, but in an *inverted manner*, in the content, composition and title of his 1791/92 play *Der Groß-Coptha* (The Great Coptha).

To conclude, the multifaceted combination of poetry, Egyptian mythology and true history in Goethe's *Märchen* therefore forms a key artistic model for Novalis's idea of an inverted Orphic *Märchen* in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. A *Märchen* can do this because for both Goethe and Novalis: "Le monde réel lui-même ressemble à un conte." (The real world itself resembles a fairy tale) (186). As the title of this new French edition evocatively declares: *À la fin tout devient poésie*, everything becomes poesy in the end – even world history.

*David W. Wood*



**Notices**

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**Mitteilungen**

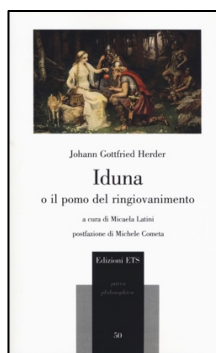


# Symphilosophie

*International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism*

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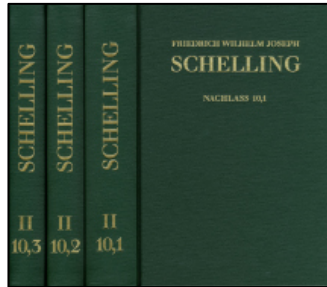
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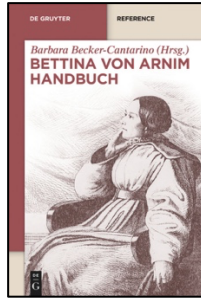




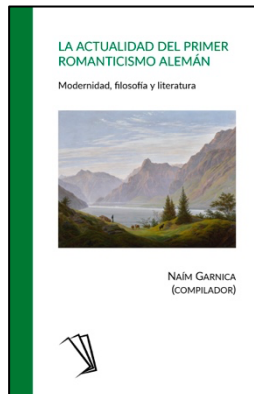
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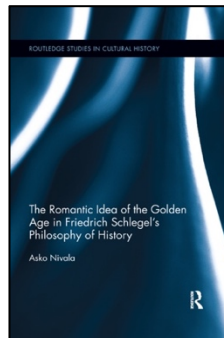
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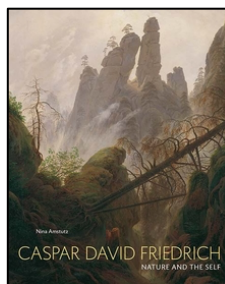
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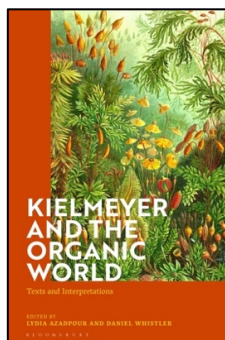
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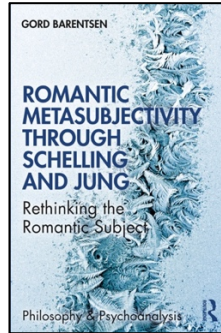
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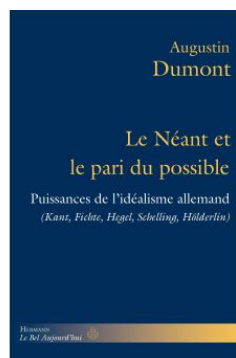
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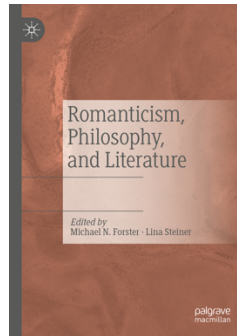
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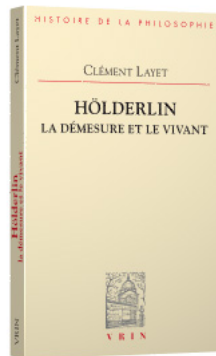
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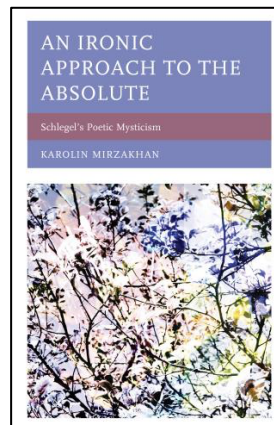
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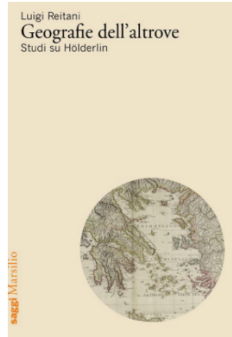
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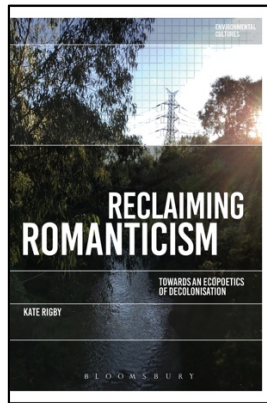
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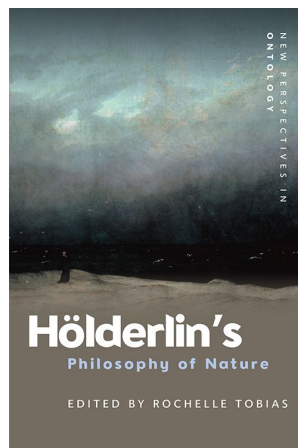
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#### Conferences/ Colloques/ Convegni/ Tagungen & Calls for Papers

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**14-15 Januar 2021**

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[https://romantikforschung.uni-frankfurt.de/files/2020/10/KvG-Workshop\\_Programm\\_Stand-19.10.2020-3.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1Gq4C4sZXhbLjnCEjfEMPDss1To0Xh\\_vf8dP8V4rm3nEUxKig3OaXnQ9s](https://romantikforschung.uni-frankfurt.de/files/2020/10/KvG-Workshop_Programm_Stand-19.10.2020-3.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1Gq4C4sZXhbLjnCEjfEMPDss1To0Xh_vf8dP8V4rm3nEUxKig3OaXnQ9s)



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**February 2021**

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**Conference Programme:**

<https://hegelwarwick.wordpress.com/2021-joining-the-circle-of-the-system/?fbclid=IwAR0XnDC-DAKvj5hJZ1thaoKaOCU2sza2mPPH1CTT36yg83G1CxwnUwaPbYA>

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**Conference Programme:**

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**9-11 June 2021, Södertörn University, Stockholm**

**Organisation:** Karl Axelsson, Camilla Flodin, Gerad Gentry, Matthias Pirholt

**Conference Programme:**

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