

Editorial

This fifth issue of *Symphilosophie* attempts to cast fresh light on an essential topic of romanticism – aesthetics and the philosophy of art. In the field of the history of philosophy, early German romanticism has long been primarily understood from the standpoint of a “metaphysics of art.” That is to say, the idea that art alone provides access to the absolute, an absolute conceived as the supreme philosophical challenge of all post-Kantian systems.¹ Some critics stigmatize this as an exorbitant speculative pretension: the sacralization of the essence of Art with a capital A, i.e. one expressed in the form of a kind of onto-theology, which remains indifferent to the reality of actual works of art.

In the domains of aesthetics and literary criticism, interest in romanticism has frequently focused on the current’s original interplay between philosophy and literature; indeed, that is one of the hallmarks of *Frühromantik*. Here too the question of the absolute has been at the heart of numerous debates. In France especially, at the height of structuralism, semiotics, and deconstruction, early German romanticism was read as the theorization of what Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe called the “literary absolute”: a conception of literature immersed in the autotelic and reflexive movement of its own production.² The intransitive dimension of romanticism was emphasized, in which the work of art was established at once as a fragment and a totality detached from the world. To employ the well-known Schlegelian image, the work of art is a hedgehog, a microcosm “autarkically closed in on itself, to mimetically replay an entire world that is forever lost.”³

The question of the artist and the act of creation have been marginalized by these types of readings. Moreover, the principle of the articulation between liberty and art entails the risk of an aestheticization of politics, as

¹ See for instance the work of Manfred Frank, in particular *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989); Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); and Jane Kneller, *Kant and the Power of Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

² See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, *L’Absolu littéraire. Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1978).

³ Olivier Schefer, *Poésie de l’infini. Novalis et la question esthétique* (Brussels: La Lettre volée, 2001), 83-84.

Walter Benjamin has shown.⁴ It is also a phenomenon that deserves to be rethought.⁵

This year's volume 5 of *Symphilosophie* seeks to bring some of these issues into sharper focus. In this regard, the main research dossier is placed under the sign of freedom, examining *inter alia* the social effects of artistic expression, especially with respect to the women of the romantic era.

We would like to warmly thank Anne Pollok (Universität Mainz) for guest-editing this issue on "Romantic Aesthetics and Freedom." Among others, Anne Pollok's research focuses on the philosophical anthropology of the German Enlightenment. She has published a monograph on Moses Mendelssohn⁶ and is interested in the role of aesthetics in Schiller's and Kant's philosophical representations of human vocation and *Bildung*. She is also co-editor (with Courtney D. Fugate) of the series: Bloomsbury Studies in Modern German Philosophy. More recently, her work has turned to Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of culture⁷, and to the practice of literary writing and salons as an emancipatory means for women. Here she has published several articles on women writers associated with early German Romanticism, including: Henriette Herz, Rahel Levin Varnhagen, and Bettina von Arnim.⁸

The core of the main thematic dossier is eight new research articles. This dossier not only deals with art in general in relation to the question of freedom, but also with specific arts, such as music, literature, and poetry. It contains contributions on a number of major German figures in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Karl Philipp Moritz, Friedrich Schiller, J.G. Fichte, and Hegel. Of course, this is not to label these thinkers as romantics. Rather, these authors allow us to better measure the inheritance and impact of romantic aesthetic thinking and artistic values. We are grateful to the contributors for their innovative research: Jane Kneller, Christoph

⁴ See for example Benjamin's reflections on fascism in *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, in W. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, eds. R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990), vol. I/2, 431-508.

⁵ Thanks to G.V. for this indication.

⁶ Anne Pollok, *Facetten des Menschen. Zur Anthropologie Moses Mendelssohns* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2010).

⁷ See Luigi Filieri, Anne Pollok (eds.), *The Method of Culture: Ernst Cassirer's Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2021).

⁸ Among others, see Anne Pollok, "A *Wunderblume* and Her Friends: How Bettina Brentano-von Arnim Develops Individuality Through Dialogue", *Hegel Bulletin* 43 / 3 (2022): 418-437; "The Role of Writing and Sociability for the Establishment of a Persona: Henriette Herz, Rahel Levin Varnhagen, and Bettina von Arnim," in *Women and Philosophy in 18th Century Germany*, edited by Corey Dyck (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 195-209; and "Bettina Brentano von Arnim", in *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Women Philosophers in the German Tradition*, eds. Kristin Gjesdal and Dalia Nassar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024) (in press).

Haffter, Allen Speight, Karolin Mirzakhani, Francesco Campana, Robert König, Caecilie Varslev-Pedersen, and Barbara Becker-Cantarino.

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This 2023 issue also includes four research articles in the “Miscellaneous” or “Varia” section, by Norman Sieroka, Anama Kotlarevsky, Felix Alejandro Cristiá, and Alexander J. B. Hampton. It is no exaggeration to say that these texts present ground-breaking findings and offer a welcome expansion of *Symphilosophie*’s scope, this time in the direction of English Romanticism (Blake and Coleridge) and the ancient Greeks, and the question of cosmography, which we have little covered until now. Lastly, this issue has four book reviews, and our usual bulletin of recent publications, calls for papers, and information about upcoming conferences and events.

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As readers of *Symphilosophie* know, one of our editorial policies is to publish new translations of the primary philosophical texts of German romanticism. Primary sources are the raw material of research work. That’s why we attach great importance to rendering them into one or other of the working languages of our journal. Our goal has been to try and make available at least one previously unpublished translation per year.

The present issue contains five such translations, three accompanying the main thematic dossier, and two in the miscellaneous section. In connection with the topic of romantic aesthetics and freedom, Anne Elizabeth and Jan Oliver Jost-Fritz have translated into English a new excerpt from Caroline and August Wilhelm Schlegel’s dialogue *The Paintings* (1799). This is part of a project to produce the first complete English edition of this essential romantic text on art. Our sincere thanks go to them for their introduction and translation. Then follows David W. Wood’s translation of some of Novalis’s studies and fragments on the fine arts. We have also benefited from Christoph Haffter’s collaboration in introducing, compiling and co-translating a selection of Bettina von Arnim’s texts on music, which are presented here for the very first time in French. We thank him for his valuable work.

We are also delighted to be able to publish Marlene Oeffinger’s previously unpublished English translation of August Ludwig Hülsen’s “On the Natural Equality of Human Beings” (1799). Forty years after the *Konstellationsforschung* research carried out by Dieter Henrich and Manfred

Frank, it is to be hoped that this first-ever translation will help provide an impetus for more philosophical work on Hülsen, a lesser-known but still key figure in German romanticism. The next translation in the miscellaneous section is the second half of the “Introduction” to Friedrich Schlegel’s Lectures on *Transcendental Philosophy* (the first translated half of Schlegel’s “Introduction” appeared last year in *Symphilosophie* 4). This rendering of Schlegel’s crucial primary text into English has been carried out by Joseph Carew. This first-ever integral English translation will doubtlessly stimulate further work on the philosophical foundations of German romanticism.

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In line with the principal title of our journal, the following pages once again furnish evidence of symphilosophy and what it means to symphilosophize. We will just add here a few more remarks to those made in previous issues about the creation and significance of the German word *Symphilosophie*.⁹ Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis did not coin this evocative expression from out of the blue. For the term itself has an ancient Greek heritage. Aristotle already uses it in Book IX of his *Nicomachean Ethics*. In a passage dedicated to the common life of friendship, Aristotle provides various examples of individuals socializing together: alongside those who come together to drink, play dice, or hunt, there are people who meet to study philosophy together and delight in the feeling of a life in common (IX, 12, 1172 a 5). The specific Greek word here is: *συμφιλοσοφεῖν* (*symphilosophhein*). The Romantics of the Jena circle were not unaware of this passage¹⁰: not only was Schleiermacher privately translating this book of Aristotle’s *Ethics* as early as 1788 / 1789¹¹, but the use of the verbal form *symphilosophhein* is common among certain ancient Greek authors after Aristotle. Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis simply reintroduced the turn in the age of philosophical modernity, coining what is still a neologism for the German language. We kindly thank Denis Thouard – editor of the book *Symphilosophie: F. Schlegel à Iéna* (2002)– for reminding us of the Aristotelian paternity of the term.

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⁹ See *Symphilosophie* 1 (2019): 5-7, and *Symphilosophie* 4 (2022): 513-550.

¹⁰ A complete translation of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* had appeared in German in 1791 by Daniel Jenisch: see *Die Ethik des Aristoteles, in zehn Büchern* (Danzig: Ferdinand Troschel, 1791), see especially 357-358.

¹¹ See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Anmerkungen und Übersetzung zu Aristoteles: Nikomachische Ethik 8-9* (1788 / 1789). In *KGA* 1.1, ed. Günter Meckenstock (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1983), 1-80, especially 80.

The photograph on the cover of this issue also refers to a legend of Greek antiquity: the story of Iphigenia. It is directly linked to the saga of the Tantalids, a myth that abundantly inspired Greek poets and tragedians, from Homer to Euripides, via Hesiod, Aeschylus, Pindar and Sophocles. Long overshadowed by the male descendants of Tantalus, Agamemnon and Orestes, it wasn't until Euripides' theatre play that the figure of Iphigenia and the legend of her sacrifice became the subject of drama. This takes place in two distinct episodes. Firstly, on the shores of Aulis, where she initially submits and then is saved from sacrifice. Secondly in Tauris, where she is held as a priestess in the temple of Artemis.

Iphigenia, the female figure deprived of her freedom of movement, did not remain the Greek Iphigenia throughout cultural history: our modernity re-appropriated her legend. This occurred in France with Racine's play *Iphigénie en Aulide* and Gluck's opera of the same name; while in Germany, her plight gave rise to one of the masterpieces of Weimar classicism, Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, published in 1787. "Iphigenie auf Tauris" is also one of the German choreographer Pina Bausch's first major works. Choreographed to Gluck's opera, it premiered in 1974 at the Wuppertal Opera House, where Pina Bausch had just taken over as director. The cover image of *Symphilosophie 5* is taken from a 2010 performance at Barcelona's Liceu opera house.

Bausch's choreography is a series of *tableaux vivants* bathed in a Rembrandt-style light. The latter in turn brings into relief the sculptural beauty of the dancers' bodies. A whole host of elements link the image of Iphigenia to the *Sacrifice of Isaac*, a picture painted by Andrea del Sarto in 1529 / 1530. The version hanging in Dresden's *Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister* is commented upon by Caroline Schlegel in the excerpt of *The Paintings* published in this year's translation section. Beyond the central motto of sacrifice – with both cases we are situated at the crossroads of two eras of artistic consciousness, the ancient and modern eras. As Jan Oliver Jost-Fritz notes in his introduction below, Caroline Schlegel's commentary on this Italian Renaissance work (which she explicitly describes as the "Laocoon of Christianity") is a contribution to the famous "Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes." Initiated in France by Charles Perrault in the previous century, the quarrel was reinterpreted in Germany not (unlike in France) as a modern reformulation of the rules of poetic art (of tragedy), but as drawing up an antithesis (that is to be overcome) between the naturalism of the ancient Greek world and the humanism of the modern world in the Christian era. What German historians have dubbed the inaugural *Romantikertreffen*, occurred in the climate of these issues. From 25-26 August 1798, the Jena

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romantics met for a joint visit to the Royal Galleries of Painting and Sculpture in Dresden. They visited the Sculpture Gallery at night by torchlight in order to better and more concretely experience the life inhabiting a sculpted human body. This decisive romantic scene conjures up the later chiaroscuro choreography of Pina Bausch's *Iphigenie auf Tauris*.

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As 2023 draws to a close, our editorial team is undergoing a double change: the departure of Manja Kisner and the arrival of Luigi Filieri. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Manja for her availability and commitment to the journal over the last four years. We wish her all the best for the continuation of her philosophical work and research. We would also like to thank Luigi for agreeing to be part of our team and look forward to his contribution to this symphilosophical publication.

Lastly, we would once again like to thank our guest editor, our associate editor, and assistant editors; as well as all the contributors to this issue for their articles, translations, and book reviews; and all the external reviewers for their invaluable expertise.

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We conclude this editorial with the announcement that the main thematic dossier of next year's sixth issue will be coordinated by our editorial team: Marie-Michèle Blondin, Luigi Filieri, Cody Staton, and Gesa Wellmann. Since the year 2024 marks the tricentenary of Immanuel Kant's birth, next year's issue of *Symphilosophie* will be devoted to the Kantian legacy of romantic philosophy. For more information, see the Call for Papers on our journal's website.

Bonn, December 2023

On behalf of the editors, Laure Cahen-Maurel