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TRANSLATION

The Social Roots of Romantic Ideology

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As we know, the advance of the capitalist economy and spread of urbanism throughout the modern era is accompanied by the advance of the rational; that is, rationally calculating action and thinking. In economy and technology; in state building, army, and politics; in science and philosophy we can trace the rise of rationality. Viewed psychologically, until the end of the eighteenth century only the natural inertia of men, who everywhere sought to hang on to tradition, and religion, with its extrarational authority and emotions, stand in opposition to rational procedure. The Enlightenment—an intellectual movement that in the eighteenth century all but dominates public opinion but whose basic tendencies are more-or-less evident among the great scientific researchers and philosophers of the seventeenth century—fights successfully against these two enemies. However, since the end of the eighteenth century other opponents have become audible. Up to that point, rationality was an unwelcome intruder and hostile to faith. Now, moreover, the Enlightenment is shallow, pure science lifeless, calculating reason vapid. Who today is not familiar with such assessments hostile to rationality? Although the new resistance against the ideals of the Enlightenment has come in waves since 1800—peaking in the decades up to 1830, then receding and then, from 1870 until today, swelling fast—the resistance of the last 130 years differs from that found in the centuries of early capitalism. This difference is most pronounced in the German cultural sphere. The French, and particularly the Anglo-American, spheres are today closer to Enlightenment ideals. The striking intellectual differences—between both the periods and the cultural spheres mentioned—justify here a brief look at that movement out of which the new irrational ideals in intellectual history emerge, namely German Romanticism (roughly 1800 to 1830). An examination of the Romantic Movement is particularly useful because almost all emotional shades hostile to rationality that appear in the ideology of our contemporary opponent—whether nationally, clerically, or fascistically oriented—cannot deny their Romantic ancestry.

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In Novalis's verdict from 1799, the writers of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment 'were constantly preoccupied with purging poetry from nature, the earth, the human soul, and the sciences. Every trace of the sacred was to be destroyed, all memory of noble events and people was to be spoiled by satire, and the world stripped of colourful ornament. Their favourite theme, on account of its mathematical obedience and impudence, was light. [...] [A]nd so they called their great enterprise "Enlightenment"'[1]. Novalis on the other hand composes hymns to the night because Romanticism seeks and finds its ideals in mysterious darkness[2]. At first, the Romantic writers value the irrational sides of the *human soul*. Premonition, longing, nebulous melancholy are in Novalis and Eichendorff, but also passion, all-consuming lust, enthusiasm, intoxication, and rapture in the Schlegel brothers,

[1] [*trans. note*] Novalis (Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg) (1772-1801), Die Christenheit oder Europa (1799). I have used Beiser's translation (Novalis, 1996 [1799]: 70) and added ellipse where Zilsel cut the text.

[2] [*trans. note*] *Hymnen an die Nacht* (1800).

Clemens Brentano, Arnim, Kleist, and E. T. A. Hoffman, the most interesting and most valuable aspects of men. And likewise humour when, that is, as Brentano demands 'one laughs from the heart not from the intellect'. Even further removed from rationality than feeling and passion are unusual and pathological mental states. Indeed, for the first time in intellectual history in the works of Romanticism dreams and insanity, lapses of consciousness, and split personality play a significant role. Abnormal mental states are always thought of as supernatural and cloaked in all the awe of magic. This mixture of occultism and psychopathology forces its way into the philosophy of the time. Schelling's followers in particular now love to speak of the 'dark side of mental life' (G. H. Schubert, 1808 and 1830)[3].

Because rationality coincides with detached objectivity, the irrational sides of mental life are those that come closest to the dissolved innermost core of the self [*das Ich*]. Indeed, Romanticism is more interested in subjective-personal experience than in objective-factual achievement. In the sphere of art, this meant the cult of *genius*. Although the concept of genius has a long prehistory and plays a significant role for specific writers of the eighteenth century it acquired its current tenor of distinctly quasi-religious awe first with Romanticism. The suggestive qualities of the idea of genius are everywhere reinforced by Romanticism. For the first time, the quasi-mythical idea that the exceptional genius went perpetually unrecognized by the contemporary world is developed with full clarity (Schopenhauer). For the first time, the modern caricature of the shallow philistine who drags all that is elevated down to his own mediocre level emerges as the dark background against which the genius ideal shines out. With this the genius ideal outgrows its original home, the sphere of the poets. Artists, musicians, religious prophets, philosophers, and researchers join the ranks of geniuses, and that peculiar division of humanity appears in which a few towering individuals are juxtaposed to the teaming masses. Such exceptional men distinguish themselves in quite diverse ways, but still, they are somehow transcendentally united by genius.

In his satire on the philistine from 1811[4], Clemens Brentano places the following demand in the mouth of the shallow Enlightenment thinker: 'All prejudice must go!' and, in Romantic spirit, goes on to identify this as meaning 'all that divides and unites former times and the primordial world [*vor- und Urgeschichte*]'. With former times and the primordial world, that is to say history, we have now arrived at a new form of irrationality. All those who in action and thought hold fast to that which has arisen historically are not governed by rational considerations and thus conform to the Romantic ideal. Romanticism has for the first time recognized the forceful superiority of history over the individual and at the same time derided as 'shallow' the ahistorical man hostile to tradition. Naturally, the Romantics particularly love the Middle Ages in which, as in all pre-capitalist eras, rationality is only sparsely developed. But it is not simply the Middle Ages that are poetically, pictorially, and scientifically idealized again and again but also history in its totality counts as a sacred power. In Novalis's essay on Christendom he at first fights the Reformation and Enlightenment with deep distain: 'Now we stand high enough […] to recognize in those strange follies remarkable crystallizations of historical matter. Thankfully we should shake hands with those intellectuals and philosophers; for this delusion had to be exhausted for the sake of posterity […]. So that India might be warm and magnificent in the centre of our planet, a cold, frozen sea […] and a

[3] [*trans. note*] Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert (1780-1860), *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (1808) and *Die Geschichte der Seele* (1830).

[4] [*trans. note*] Clemens Brentano (1778-1842), *Der Philister vor, in und nach der Geschichte* (1811).

long night, had to make both poles inhospitable.'[5] So Novalis in 1799. Some twenty years later Hegel, beholding world history, will speak of the thesis and antithesis that are necessary for synthesis to emerge therefrom—because without the metaphysical enthusiasm of the literary Romantics for history there would be no Hegel—and no Marx. It is the Romantic writers' reverence for all things historical that has decisively stimulated many cultural configurations [*Kulturgebilde*]. Romantic legal scholars are the first to study law not through formal logic but historically (Savigny)[6]. Romantic writers research early German poetry for the first time. Romantic philologists generate German linguistics and classical studies.

Indivisible from the historical is the *national* way of seeing things. Romanticism loves all historical-extrarational bonds. They view the individual as embedded in the tradition of his profession and his estate [*Stand*] and the estates are united in the nation. While for the Enlightenment folklore/national character [*Volkstum*] is simply a web of irrational traditions and prejudices, for Romanticism national peculiarity and national bonds, like all that is irrational, are sacred (Fichte, Görres). And the same goes for *religion*. Once more the new enthusiasm for religious feeling, religious ecstasy, and religious faith in miracles cannot simply be equated with the Romantic Movement's well-known preference for Catholicism. Alongside Catholic and Catholicizing Romanticism there is also Romantic-subjective Protestantism (Schleiermacher) and a quite unorthodox aesthetic-suggestive enthusiasm for religiosity in general: 'Whoever wants to see religion must travel to India' announces Friedrich Schlegel in 1803[7]. Schlegel's investigations into religion and language in India grew out of this enthusiasm for devout Asia (1808)[8]; investigations that have become decisive in the development of comparative linguistics and initiated the influx of Far Eastern mysticism into Europe. With Schopenhauer (1819)[9] Indian teachings of salvation have then flowed into Philosophy for the first time.

This holy trinity of history, nation, and religion was first sketched in purely ideological terms. Of all Romanticism's ideological aspects, these are self-evidently the most significant, socially and politically, and thus they also govern the Romantic theory of the state. This theory of the state emphasizes in particular the historically emerging occupational and professional groups and transforms them into the transcendental. The economic and political thought of the archreactionary Adam Müller (1809 and 1819)[10] enthuses about all irrational bonds, praises pre-capitalist estates and guilds, and finally ends up with the Catholic Church. In contrast, Müller attacks Adam Smith's

[5] [*trans. note*] Novalis, 1996 [1799]: 73-74. I have added ellipses where Zilsel cut the text. In doing so, he slightly, but not significantly, altered the meaning. The full passage is as follows:

Now we stand high enough to smile back amiably upon those former times and to recognize in those strange follies remarkable crystallizations of historical matter. Thankfully we should shake hands with those intellectuals and philosophers; for this delusion had to be exhausted for the sake of posterity and the scientific view of things had to be legitimated. More charming and colourful, poetry stands like an ornate India in contrast to the cold, dead pointed arches of an academic reason. So that India might be warm and magnificent in the centre of our planet, a cold, frozen sea, desolate cliffs and fog, rather than the starry sky and a long night, had to make both poles inhospitable.

[6] [*trans. note*] Most likely a reference to Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779-1861), *Das Recht des Besitzes* (1803).

[7] [*trans. note*] Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), *Reise nach Frankreich* (1803). Zilsel is paraphrasing rather than quoting.

[8] [*trans. note*] *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier. Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Alterthumskunde* (1808).

[9] [*trans. note*] Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1819).

[10] [*trans. note*] Adam Müller (1779-1829), *Die Elemente der Staatskunst* (1809) and *Von der Notwendigkeit einer theologischen Grundlage der gesamten Staatswissenschaften* (1819).

rational-capitalist economics because for him every attempt to analyse social causes and interrelations scientifically and rationally is nothing but 'impudent theory'.

In his fragment from 1799, *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*, Novalis tells the fairy tale of the childhood love between Hyazinth and Rosenblütchen. A wondrous old man tempts the boy Hyazinth away from his love. For years, the boy wanders the eerie world looking for its original secret. In Saïs he comes to stand in front of the picture of a veiled goddess. He lifts the veil and Rosenblütchen stands before him. The mysterious primary origin of the world lies in the sensitive, childlike unreasoning depths of the soul, or so one might roughly summarize the fairy tale's meaning. Indeed, one may be justified in seeing in this the basic idea of the entire Romantic Movement. Romantic writers almost always seek to connect their manifold endeavours intellectually. The life of the soul and the genius of art, history, folklore, and religion lead, it is always suggested, into the same sacred depths. Likewise, all natural formations are, it is said again and again, 'mysterious Sanskrit'; are 'runes' and 'hieroglyphs' that proclaim the same primal mystery. The entire experience must be deciphered and uniformly interpreted—formulated as a thesis: the whole world is a mantle over a single, soul-like, irrational, and sacred primal origin. Or, as Novalis puts it, nature is the solidified enchanted city of the spirit.

This brings us to the Romantic Movement philosophers because the so-called 'German idealist philosophy' of our textbooks is in reality nothing other than the philosophy of Romanticism. Fichte and Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer, clearly in distinct ways, thus transform that genuinely Romantic thought of the soul-like primal origin of the world [*Weltenurgrund*]. For Fichte, the primal origin is the self, which as 'action' [*Tatenhandlung*] drives the world out of itself. In Schelling it is the world soul [*Weltseele—anima mundi*]; in Hegel world reason [*Weltvernunft*]; in Schopenhauer, the primal will [*Urwille*]. Fichte is a follower of Kant. His early work is closely bound to the world of Enlightenment thought but all his deviations from Kant express a distinctly Romantic subjectivism. His satire on the Enlightenment thinker Nicolia (1801)[11], his mystical *Anweisung zum seligen Leben* (1806), his speech to the German nation (1808)[12], his journal on animal magnetism (1813)[13] are fully imbued with the spirit of Romanticism. Schilling stands closest to literary Romanticism. His mythological-fantastic nature doctrine and theosophy, just like his metaphysics of genius, are indivisible from Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel. Matters are somewhat different with Hegel. Hegel has built the most comprehensive and meticulously structured system that seeks to rationalize Romantic myth and align it with all the facts of experience—even the metaphysical primal origin here has become 'rational'. But Hegelian reason, which did not oppose true and false but rather drove ever new oppositions out of itself that are in turn transcended, diverges from that which one would call reason in an everyday sense and is irrational enough. There is no need to point to the deeply Romantic roots of Hegel's philosophy of history. And finally, Schopenhauer! With him the world's primal origin is as irrational and dark as the dark Novalis—but in the process it has become subdued will and slips into original evil. This time it is the devil who resides in the sacred depths. Certainly, it was Schopenhauer who most idiosyncratically reordered Romantic myth. He fiercely mocked his Romantic fathers—Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. He completely lacked a sense of history, but his metaphysics of nature and mythology of genius, his preference for Indian religiosity, his attempt at spiritualism place him too in that intellectual movement to which all those philosophers mention here belong. All these thinkers are no longer satisfied with sober truth but rather constantly operate with the opposition between the shallow and the deep. This new idea of 'depth', which here arises for

[11] [*trans. note*] Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), *Friedrich Nicolais Leben und sonderbare Meinungen* (1801).

[12] [*trans. note*] *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1807/08).

[13] [*trans. note*] *Tagebuch über den Magnetismus* (1813).

the first time in the modern period, is however their common Romantic heritage. By the way, at crucial points Schelling and Schopenhauer even explicitly express the Novalis-Schlegel-Hoffmannian thought that the world is an inscription that must not be merely empirically observed but also deciphered for its secret meaning and interpreted irrationally.

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We have already dwelt on purely ideological aspects for too long. Now we must examine the roots of this ideology from a Marxist perspective. First the social situation of the Romantic writers themselves! Viewed economically, the writers of the early capitalist epoch fall into three groups: they are either aristocrats who live from rent or commoners who are maintained by aristocrats or princes and who in return grant their patrons fame, entertainment, and intellectual lustre, or they are civil servants on fixed salaries, clergy, and professors who pursue literary activities only as a sideline. There are many overlaps between the last two groups. Initially, in contrast, professional writers who live on earnings from their writings are absent because the precondition for their livelihood, namely a broad stratum of educated readers, is lacking. Not until around 1750 did the rise of the bourgeoisie in England and France create the required reading public, and with it the first freelance writers. In contrast, in economically backward Germany decades later men like Lessing, Herder, Wieland, Goethe, still lived as ducal librarian, court chaplain, princely governor, and minister. However, after 1795 a circle of writers under thirty years of age, who had already published in established journals and in newly founded newspapers, forms in the university town of Jena. They declined aristocratic patronage, created a literary salon on their own initiative, and consciously distanced themselves in their lifestyle from the salaried professors, civil servants, and businessmen who surrounded them. These were the early Romantics, the first freelance writers in Germany. The circle's centre is formed by the Schlegel brothers—grandsons of a professor and author and sons of a consistory councillor and author[14], the rope manufacture's son Tieck[15], and the nobleman von Hardenberg-Novalis. Tieck later continued to live as a writer and dramatist. Only Novalis had his main employment as an official in the Elector's salt-works[16]. Associated with the early Romantics were Kapellmeister and man of letters [Johann Friedrich] Reichardt, students, actors, painters, and some young professors, theologians, and civil servants still only loosely bound to their profession and active as writers. The Jena Circle dissolved itself already in 1800 but its spirit spread through similarly constituted writers' circles. To name some names, Brentano, von Arnim, von Kleist, and E. T. A. Hoffmann also live for longer or shorter periods without steady positions and without patronage. Arnim's literary activity pretty much ends when, at the age of thirty-seven, he is forced by constant financial worries to take on the management of his family estate (1818). Conversely, Hoffmann begins to publish when, at the age of thirty-one, he loses his position as a judge in the tumultuous war of 1807. The fates of the Romantic writers—one thinks, for example, of Kleist's pitiful end—show how extremely difficult it still is to make a living as a freelance writer[17].

The early Romantics had been active in smaller university towns. Their literary activity in part grows out of the freedom of student life. The movement that emerges however gradually undergoes two

[14] [*trans. note*] August [Wilhelm] Schlegel (1767-1845) and [Karl Wilhelm] Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829).

[15] [*trans. note*] Johann Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853).

[16] [*trans. note*] In Weißenfels (Saxony-Anhalt).

[17] [*trans. note*] Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811) died in a suicide pact at the age of thirty-four. On the banks of the Kleiner Wannsee (Berlin) he first shot, at her behest, the terminally ill Henriette Vogel (1780-1811) and then himself (see Stein, 2014).

changes, each representing something completely new in German intellectual history. After 1805 Romanticism starts to come into personal contact with foreign literary circles and, beyond this, begins to take on a metropolitan character. It is Madame de Staël[18], a writer and émigré with haute bourgeois-aristocratic colouring, who largely forges these international connections. The royal seat of Dresden, and more especially Berlin and Vienna, supplied the 'metropolitan' atmosphere. In Romantic circles in Berlin and Vienna after 1815 the haute bourgeoisie, aristocracy, writers, and artists mix, while in Vienna Jesuits too are present. Since for the first time in German intellectual history Romantic circles gather in the salons of the nouveau riche, often Jewish finance capitalists—in Vienna, the Arnsteins, Eskeles, and Pereias—rigid feudal and solid old-bourgeois attitudes are from the outset softened and compelled towards considerable intellectualization in a new way. That milieu, like the entire later Romantic Movement, is without doubt distinctly counter-revolutionary, yet here too it is the literati who provide the glue and the spirit.

The lifestyle of Romantic writers is consciously unbourgeois. Sociologically instructive is, for example, the all but bohemian married and love life of the early Romantics and its artistic expression, the sexually revolutionary novel *Lucinde* (Friedrich Schlegel, 1799). Likewise, for Arnim and Brentano, even rape and seduction are more hallowed than philistine intercourse. Likewise, bourgeois marriages of convenience are mocked and love marriages demanded. Sexual passion is thus always cloaked in an aesthetic metaphysics at the apex of which is ideological opposition to sober reason and sociological opposition to the bourgeoisie and honed by paradoxes. Such a constellation is always characteristic of freelance writers. Even more instructive is the attitude of the early Romantics towards the economy. They stand outside regular employment and are fully conscious of this fact. Often, they complain—in particular, a broken Brentano in his letters. More often their lack of engagement with economic life is ideologically transfigured. Beggars, itinerant folk, students, gamblers, and others outside the economy are often depicted poetically. From the eulogy to 'sloth and God-like idleness' in Schlegel's Lucinde to Eichendorff's charming novella *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* (1826), vocational philistinism is mocked again and again. Sometimes there is an obvious sociological connection with turmoil in the conditions of life of the intellectuals. 'Let the dutiful composer become Kapellmeister; the poet court poet; the painter court portraitist, and soon you will have no more useless fantasists in the land, only useful citizens' mocks the ingenious musician Kreisler in Hoffmann (*Kater Murr*, 1819)[19]. And Brentano sneers at the solid economic bourgeoisie who welcome the fact that nowadays the actor is no longer in a traveling troop: 'They wish the actors good fortune, that they come into good company; that is, that they come to them in order to be equally great philistines' (*Der Philister*, 1811).

The poetry of the age of patronage is also in its themes—honour, power, love—completely unencumbered by the economy. But it is aimed at an aristocratic audience; that is, landed rentiers who are above breadwinning. People engaged in economic activity are, until towards the end of the eighteenth century, ignored in literature not ridiculed. In contrast, freelance writers depend on an audience consisting of economic citizens. They face not individual patrons but rather an anonymous mass audience to which they have to appear in a good light and are thus subject to the laws of mass psychology. Thus, the audience must be whipped up; its undesirable characteristics must be derided. In the age of patronage, a travesty of the audience is dispensable. Even so, there we occasionally find

[18] [*trans. note*] Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein (1766-1817).

[19] [*trans. note*] E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776-1822), *Lebens-Ansichten des Katers Murr nebst fragmentarischer Biographie des Kapellmeisters Johannes Kreisler in zufälligen Makulaturblättern* (1819/21).

the caricature of the rich carouser who is unfit to be a patron of the arts due to his lack of education![20] The freelance writer in contrast necessarily develops the caricature of the audience as commonplace philistine; that is, a travesty of sober economic citizens and civil servants who become absorbed by family and profession, who do not bother with literature, art, and intellect, and who reject every irrational impulse and all non-conformists. It is precisely this equally effective and consequential travesty that is formulated by Romanticism for the first time. It can be found in the Schlegel brothers, in Tieck, Hoffmann, and Eichendorff. It forms the background to the intellectual attitude of the whole Romantic Movement and is filled out in detail and grounded metaphysically in the grandiose witty satire on the philistine by Brentano from 1811. Here the social reference to businessmen and civil servants clearly comes to the fore. As the name suggests, the caricature of the philistine originally came from student circles; from the youthful, unattached, and not yet employed students who had their run-ins with the shopkeepers and craftsmen of the university towns. The ideal of freedom coloured by student life then plays a large role in the writers of the *Sturm und Drang*, which occasionally reaches into the early Romantic Movement (*Halle, ein Studentenspiel*, Arnim, 1811)[21]. Precisely this student commentary is, however, mocked as philistine in Hoffmann's *Klein Zaches*[22] and *Kater Murr*. The caricature of the philistine is therefore decisively refined in the Romantic Movement. From the students it retains its anti-bourgeois, anti-economic edge, but has become steeped in literary-artistic intellectualism, and the philistine is therefore now identical with the petit bourgeois [*Spießbürger*], the upstanding citizen [*Pfahlbürger*], the stout and stolid denizen [*Mastbürger*], and the 'bourgeoisie' of modern metropolitan artists and writers[23]. In Germany in the early nineteenth century, however, all haut bourgeois aspects are of course lacking.

Even *épater le bourgeois*, the artistic scandalizing of the audience, is already quite familiar in Romanticism. When Schlegel, for example, in his studies of literary history praises precisely the minor works of great writers—from Boccaccio not *Decameron* but *The Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*; from Cervantes not *Don Quixote* but *The Siege of Numantia*; from Shakespeare (the likely falsely attributed) *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*—so such traits of literary snobbery, because they represent a historical novelty, are all the more sociologically telling. This is because only freelance littérateurs who wish to distance themselves from the audience emphasize their arcane knowledge and seek paradox. The same spirit lies behind well-known 'Romantic irony'. In Tieck's comedies for example prompters, stagehands, and a handful of audience members join in, the last as a chorus of philistines. Illusions are created and then shattered. Art becomes a superior game. The freelance littérateur towers above his work—and his audience. The court poet would never address his princely patron in this way. And here finally lies the sociological explanation of the idea of depth. The writing in Athenaeum, the first journal of the Romantic writers, was paradoxical and enigmatic, to the extent that some readers had complained. Friedrich Schlegel responds. His sparklingly witty essay *Über die*

[20] [*author's note*] cf. Zilsel, E. *Die Entstehung des Geniebegriffes*, Tübingen, 1926.

[21] [*trans. note*] Achim von Arnim (Carl Joachim Friedrich Ludwig von Arnim) (1781-1831), *Halle und Jerusalem. Studentenspiel und Pilgerabentheuer* (1811).

[22] [*trans. note*] E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Klein Zaches, genannt Zinnober* (1819).

[23] [*trans. note*] *Spießbürger* is usually translated as philistine, and *Kleinbürger* is closer to the neutral usage of petit bourgeois. However, for philistine Zilsel uses the word *Philister* and *Spießbürger* (or *Spießig*) is very close to petit bourgeois in the derogatory sense, as for example in 'petit-bourgeois mentality' – i.e., narrow minded and conformist. *Pfahlbürger* is a historical term dating from the Middle Ages for those living beyond the city limits but who nonetheless had acquired town burghers' rights. The use of the term is presumably ironic and close to the more common *bieder*, upright, conventional, staid, etc. *Mastbürger* seems to be a rarity. I take it this is a, once more ironic, reference, this time to *die Mast* (fattening (up))/*mästen* (to fatten/to gorge). The list may be a humorous rhetorical intensification: *der Spieß*, spike/pike; *der Pfahl*, stake/pale; and *der Mast*, mast.

Unverständlichkeit (1800) battles in principle all triviality. He demands in principle fundamentally paradoxical formulations of the truth, enthuses about depth, finally leading to a worldview: the well-being of families and nations rests on opacity. No disrespectful reason may approach their sacred boundary: 'Truly, you would be scared if the whole world ever became perfectly comprehensible. And is it not itself, this infinite world, created by the comprehension of the incomprehensible?' In this way stylistic obscurity is all but cosmically justified. The world's hallowed primal ground and the writing style of a literary journal—does one still doubt that Romantic metaphysics derives from the anti-rational ideal of depth and that this in turn arises sociologically from the freelance littérateur's antagonism towards his audience?

Of course, the suggestive, quasi-religious idea of the genius, which the Romantic Movement first developed, has the same roots. The genius and the philistine—these are the ideological reflections that correspond sociologically to the freelance writer and freelance artist and their bourgeois mass audience. The interconnections are self-evident and cannot be discussed in the limited space at our disposal. By the way, the anti-bourgeois and anti-economic tip of the Romantic genius ideal occasionally appears completely undisguised, for example in Hoffmann's novel of the painter and the merchant, *Der Artushof* (1815).

In general, the extrarational conduct that makes up a large part of everyone's inner life is particularly strongly developed at all times and under all economic conditions in poets, writers, and artists. Artistic achievements are intimately bound up with unconscious processes. Artists are particularly dependent on atmospheres, enthusiasm, rapture, and inspirational ideas. Even in quite primitive societies the singer and the bard therefore border on the sorcerer, the entranced, the religious seer. The very first germs of the irrational literary professional ideology are ancient. The irrationality of the poet becomes particularly clear by way of contrast when in the course of societal development social and economic circumstances shift to the side of calculability. This is the case with early capitalism, whereby however intellectuals at first merely confront a small audience of rentier patrons. The contrast attains the decisive momentum when writers and artists become completely dependent on a mass bourgeois audience the members of which are themselves employed and therefore progress all the more the better they know how to calculate, but who nevertheless must grant writers and artists admiration and income. Now calculating conduct must be emphatically disparaged, the extrarational elevated to the highest value of life as a whole, and the professional ideology of the literati enlarged into a suggestive worldview. This is exactly what German Romanticism accomplished for the first time.

Up to now we have observed Romanticism as a movement of a small societal subgroup. Now it is once again time to incorporate it into the larger currents of European society as a whole. We start with its attitude towards the French Revolution. Friedrich Schlegel's *Athenäumfragment* of 1799 has become famous[24]. In that work the French Revolution, Fichte's philosophy of science, and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* are celebrated as the three great trends of the age. What explains this revolutionary momentum? The educated youth of the German bourgeoisie had sympathized with the bourgeois revolutionaries in France. In particular, the aging Kant and young Fichte had given expression to their sympathy. In 1796 Schlegel thoroughly reviews Kant's essay *Zum ewegen Frieden*[25], which, as

[24] [*trans. note*] The standard reference is *Athenäums-Fragmente* (1798).

[25][*trans. note*] Kant's *Zum ewegen Frieden*, known in English as Perpetual Peace, was published in 1795. The full title of Schlegel's critique is *Versuch über den Begriff des Republikanismus veranlaßt durch die Kantische Schrift zum ewigen Frieden* (1796).

is well known, sharply rejects, politically, absolutism and, socially, the aristocracy. The review titles itself *Versuch über den Begriff des Republikanismus* [Essay on the Concept of Republicanism] and agrees enthusiastically with Kant. The two objections raised by Schlegel are all the more telling: Kant does not value the [Jacobin] dictatorship—'one of the most splendid inventions ever created through political genius'—and he fails to do justice to the 'sovereignty of the people' and to the 'sanctity of the people'. Both deviations from Kant take a leftward turn. Both, however, take a genius-irrational turn. And four years later Schlegel highly praises the French revolutionaries as 'mystics'. He wishes their work to be understood religiously and see its religiosity carried forward (*Ideen*, 1800). For us, whose vision has been sharpened by similar contemporary manifestations, the revolutionary spirit of the early Romantics is a sociologically clear-cut matter. The early Romantics revolt against the audience; their sexual view is highly revolutionary. Among educated Germans, Friedrich Schlegel is among the first to remove the wig. And here also lies the root of their political ideologies. They praise the political revolution because they are literary rebels and because they have a metaphysical enthusiasm for every irrational pathos. Objective political goals are foreign to them[26].

Just as aesthetic-literary rooted is the attitude of early Romanticism to religion. As early as 1799 Novalis and Schlegel enthuse about the Catholic Church and the new Christianity. But here Novalis announces a new saviour who like a 'true genius, will be at home with men, believed but not seen. He will be visible to the believer in countless forms: consumed as bread and wine, embraced as a lover, breathed as air, heard as word and song, and as death received into the heart of the departing body with heavenly joy and the highest pains of love.'[27] The beautiful language must not allow us to forget that the content of Christian beliefs is completely aestheticized and all but vanishes. The early Romantics enthuse not about any religious conviction but about religious enthusiasm. In religion too they seek not truth but depth. And so it is too with Romanticism's ideology of the sanctity of the nation. In 1802 in a letter to Brentano the young Arnim develops his plans for the nation: a publishing house must be founded, Goethe songs must be disseminated among the people, a new system of musical notation and new musical instruments must be invented, and a writers' academy must be created in a castle close to the Rhein Falls. In this way Germany would become unified and foreign forces kept at bay. Sympathy for the lower, uneducated, not yet rational classes is clearly evident, but in an attitude that is literary through and through. In the following years of the Napoleonic Wars the Romantic Movement's national ideology took on political-military aspects. Still, only the officer's son von Kleist made any serious effort to take part in the fighting. The rest of the Romantic writers stuck to literature.

The French Revolution is the victory of bourgeois over aristocratic society. Similarly, in the national current at the start of the nineteenth century the retreat of dynasties is indivisible from the rise of the bourgeoisie, and in Germany was evidently powerfully aided by the Napoleonic Wars of aggression. Finally, under a thin stratum of urban intellectuals the world of religious thought had persisted throughout the entire Enlightenment. All these processes play out in European society as a whole, but early Romanticism fed and incorporated them into the new professional ideology of the freelance literati. The great revolution in France now calls forth opposition forces across Europe that

[26] [*author's note*] In a parody of Schleiermacher (*Vertraute Briefe von Adelheid B. an ihre Freundin Julia S.* [1801]) [Christoph Friedrich] Nicolai [1733-1811], leader of Berlin Enlightenment, contrasts Schlegel's revolutionary *Athenäumfragment* with three other major events of the century: Friedrich the Great, the American Republic, and the potato. Apparently, German businessmen only like a republic if there is an ocean in between and *sans-culottes* are absent. At closer range, enlightened absolutism is quite sufficient. This too one must know in order to understand the revolutionary enthusiasm of early Romanticism.

[27] [*trans. note*] Novalis (1996 [1799]: 74).

remodel the writers' worldview and put it to service. How this works is made quite clear by one of their number, Baron de la Motte-Fouqué[28]. Fouqué never went through a phase of literary rebellion even though he was a few years older than Brentano and Arnim. As early as 1793 the sixteen-year-old, already well equipped with the class instincts of a young Baron, ran into constant disagreement with his middle-class private tutor concerning the French Revolution. Eight years later Fouqué becomes acquainted with Schlegel and becomes a Romantic writer. His old German dramas, his numerous chivalric novels and novellas lack the richness of thought and the glittering spirit of his literary master, but they too are imbued with the sanctity of the irrational, of the Middle Ages, of folklore, and of religion. It is precisely these unparadoxical and often cloying works of Fouqué that achieve the greatest public success of all Romantic writings between 1808 and 1820. In 1840, he then published the *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Adel* [Journal for the German Aristocracy] and received a pension from the King of Prussia. Fouqué's resonance makes it very clear which social forces now appropriate anti-rational literary ideology. The French Revolution triggers a powerful countermovement of all absolutist, feudal, and church circles, which the bourgeoisie, ridden with angst about the revolution, in part joins, in part does not oppose. The rational Enlightenment is now tainted by its association with the Revolution; the sacred power of irrational tradition works to preserve the state, the Middle Ages appear feudal, the altar becomes the support of the throne, and folklore is likewise suitable for stemming revolution. Universal, equal, rational human rights fall away for the Romantic Movement: one thing does not suit all—the French may revolt but Germany has a distinct history and acts differently. Thus, Romanticism becomes in part distinctly counter-revolutionary—an instrument of the aristocracy and the financial bourgeoisie—in part agreeably escapist for the average citizen wary of revolution. Even those Romantics who had begun as rebellious littérateurs now become pious and archreactionary. In the reactionary period from 1815 to 1830, for example in the works of Adam Müller and Görres[29], this development reaches its highpoint.

The curious transformation of literary metaphysics into an ideology of counter-revolution is not difficult to understand. From the start, Romanticism springs from the rebellion against the spirit of calculating commercial society; a rebellion against the middle class. Bourgeois and Romantic attitudes are sharply antithetical from the beginning[30]. Originally this was merely the antagonism of the newly formed freelance littérateurs in Germany towards their audience. Then, as the French Revolution mobilizes a powerful anti-bourgeois movement with a quite different ancestry, that movement was easily able to appropriate this literary ideology: all it takes is to downplay the bohemian aspects and to politically supplement somewhat the anti-bourgeois barbs. After all, the great class struggles in society as a whole are always stronger than the status concerns of smaller groups, even if they include a group as ideologically influential as the literati.

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Some general comments still need to be included. Our sketch has shown that ideological courses of events first come about through the combination of large-scale class struggles and the interaction between small societal subgroups. In particular, those small groups that really disseminate ideologies—writers, artists, philosophers, etc.—are important in intellectual history. Their respective

[28] [trans.note] Friedrich Heinrich Karl de la Motte, Baron Fouqué (1777-1843).

[29] [trans.note] Johann Joseph Görres (1776-1848).

[30] [*author's note*] [Eduard von] Bauernfeld [1802-1890] wrote about this contrast in his comedy *Bürgerlich und Romantisch* as late as 1835.

social situation should be closely scrutinized by the Marxist history of ideas. Further, the significance of the pace of partial societal developments can acquire for history has become evident. In Germany, the emergence of freelance littérateurs 'coincidently' corresponds with the period of counter actions carried out against the French Revolution. In England and France this happens some half a century earlier. Probably it is precisely this coincidence that in Germany, on the one hand, supplied counter-revolutionary ideology with such an abundance of intellectual and cultural stimuli and, on the other, created a powerful resonance for literary irrationalism. In comparison, in English and French Romanticism these currents were noticeably more meagrely developed. In Germany too anti-rational ideology quickly ebbs after 1830, the time of industrialization and the natural sciences. Only towards the end of that century as the conservative peasantry enters politics bringing with it a new religious-ecclesiastical groundswell; only as the urban intellectuals begin to suffer more under the rationality of the business and machine world; and, above all, only as the dangerous rising proletariat drives the bourgeoisie into bitter defence does the Romantic Movement's irrational literary and artistic metaphysics, which had never died out, come to be honoured once more. From [the idea of] the brilliant personality and depth down to the Schlegel-Schelling opposition between the organic and the mechanical, Romantic sacred ideals will once more be invoked and adapted to new opponents and to new problems.

Finally, a word about the problems of irrationality itself! One will find it hard to believe that capitalist industrial society required the freelance writer and the artist in order to become aware of the effectiveness of the extrarational. But this appears to be the case. There is namely an important difference between the styles of thinking in early capitalism and that of the last 120 years, which can be traced back to the emergence of Romanticism. It has become self-evident to us that artistic production is not a matter of rational calculation. But we now view not just the artist but people in general very differently from the Enlightenment. Initially, Schopenhauer taught metaphysically that the decisive factors for human behaviour play out not in cognition but in the will. Voluntaristic psychology has followed him. It has empirically demonstrated how cognition is governed by drives. Deep psychology has taken the final step. Since Freud we view consciousness as a whole merely as a thin crust under which dark and powerful currents are at play. Once the Enlightenment liked to define human beings as reasoning animals. For us today this definition is valid only within severe limitations. And what applies to individuals applies to society. The Enlightenment placed a low value on mindless mass processes. The businessman calculates and quickly advances. Whoever does not calculate will be out competed and will happily return to reason. If one translates this schema into intellectual terms, one has approximately the image that early capitalism created of history and society. Early capitalism dissolved society into individuals who, insofar as they are connected at all, come together only out of reason. And history it viewed as an uncoordinated game of intrigue; intelligent and stupid individuals conspire against each other and the intelligent easily carry the day. The Romantics disparagers of this commercialism were the first to overcome this inadequate image. It was not until the Romantics that the power of extrarational tradition was discovered and the effects of the historical past in every present and the superiority of historical mass processes over individuals was intuitively recognized. Hegel brought these intuitions into a powerful system of thought. And finally, Marx expressed the thought that it is not the calculating thinking of individuals but the economic needs of the masses that drive history forward. For the course of history it is no longer enough that a thinker, however clever, works out what for him personally appears reasonable and then writes it down in a book to convey it to other thinkers. In intellectual-historical terms, the irrational Romantic Movement ultimately lies between the utopians of the early modern era, for whom rational thought is all powerful, and Marx, who makes thought dependent on the economy.

Precisely the example of Marx however shows what divides us from the Romantics. The Romantic Movement did not merely identify extrarational darkness, it rather sanctifies it, withdrawing it from science and handing it over to magic. Its fruitful new insights spring, as so often in history, from an emotive, hazy metaphysics mingled with magic. As good Marxists, as heirs to Hegel, we may apply to the Romanticism that which Novalis was the first to say about the course of history: 'Now we stand high enough […] to recognize in those strange follies remarkable crystallizations of historical matter. Thankfully we should shake hands with those intellectuals and philosophers; for this delusion had to be exhausted for the sake of posterity […]. So that India might be warm and magnificent in the centre of our planet, a cold, frozen sea […] and a long night, had to make both poles inhospitable.' Out of its literary needs the Romantic Movement made the enormous discovery that the vast majority of human manifestations of life do not arise out of rational considerations. Our worldview has become much darker as a result of this discovery. Nevertheless, and for this very reason, we shall never cease to explore the irrational in a worldly and scientific way; psychologically, biologically, and economic-sociologically. Even extrarational processes show regularities, can be calculated in advance, can be subsumed under rational laws, and can thus be incorporated into rational plans. Not only abstract structures of reason, but also human instincts can be scientifically recognized and guided by knowledge; even loving, struggling people can realize rational plans.

Because traditions slow down the course of history and because masses are less flexible than individuals, the irrational aspects of history appear fairly conservative. Nevertheless, it would be superficial simply to equate the extrarational with the reactionary. The real motor of world history, as Marx has shown, is not thought but the economy. And the masses are not only difficult to set in motion but also difficult to resist. Fact-blind 'reasonableness' is therefore not particularly revolutionary. Certainly, it cannot be said often enough that even revolutions require knowledge and a plan if they are to achieve their goal. But the unreasonable in man, seen from a sociological point of view, is not simply ballast and inertia. It is also the impetus, force, and a strong following wind in the sails of history.

Trans. Alan Scott

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