

GERMAN ROMANTICS AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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The German Romantics were never fervent ideological supporters of the French Revolution or its goals and ideas. Contrary to some established interpretations, the initial approval of the Revolution by some Romantics was not ideologically motivated and had no connection with their political conceptions or ideas. Rather, it was an expression of their enthusiasm for a new and strange phenomenon combined with their repulsion towards the reality of the life in German absolutist bureaucratic and mechanical states. Yet, this initial enthusiasm did not last long. By 1800, all representatives of the Romantic Movement had turned away from the Revolution and become its critics, some even transforming into proponents of conservative ideas. However, this did not represent a break within romantic thought. Already in the early days of the Revolution, the Romantics had formulated all the important concepts of their criticism of it, which they later expanded upon. This criticism of the Revolution was in accordance with the Romantic understanding of the concepts of tradition, state, and religion, as well as with their general criticism of the Enlightenment and modernity.

WHAT IS ROMANTICISM?

If we want to speak about the relationship between the German Romantics and the French Revolution, the logical question to ask is – what really was German Romanticism? Although Romanticism occupies an important place in the intellectual history of Europe and especially Germany, there are still disputes among scholars concerning the definition of this movement. In fact, “there are about as many definitions of Romanticism as there are books on it”¹ and “the literature on romanticism is larger than romanticism itself.”² Yet, Romanticism was certainly much more than simply an artistic movement. It was seen as a “worldview” or a “cultural movement,”³ as “an outlook on the world and life as such.”⁴ A profound feeling of the mystery of existence is one of the dominant features in Romantic art and writing. This means, then, that Romantic elements can be found in any historical period and across all cultures. Hence, as an outlook on life, Romanticism is more than just a historical phase. Elements of Romanticism can be found in such diverse sources as ancient Indian texts, treatise of the Neo-Platonists, medieval Christianity, and works by Ranke, Nietzsche, Wagner, and Thomas Mann, as well as Ernst Jünger.⁵ Traces of romantic ideas even found their way into the work of rationalists like Max Weber.⁶ On the other hand, as a

1 Reinhold Aris, *Political Thought in Germany 1789–1815*, Russell & Russell, New York, 1965, p. 209.

2 Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999, p. 1.

3 Othmar Spann, *Die Haupttheorien der Volkswirtschaftslehre*, Verlag Quelle & Meyer, Leipzig, 1930, S. 95.

4 Jakob Baxa, *Einführung in die romantische Staatswissenschaft*, Verlag von Gustav Fischer, Jena, 1931, S. 9.

5 See: Jakob Baxa, *Gesellschaft und Staat im Spiegel deutscher Romantik*, Verlag von Gustav Fischer, Jena, 1924, S 5–9; Rüdiger Safranski, *Romantik, eine deutsche Affäre*, Carl Hanser Verlag, München, 2007; Stanislav Vinaver, „Susreti sa nemačkim romantičarima“ u: Zoran Mišić (ur.) *Nemački Romantičari I*, Nolit, Beograd, 1959, str. 10.

6 Hans S. Reiss, *The Political Thought of the German Romantics 1793–1815*,

single, relatively cohesive worldview and outlook on life, it found its best expression in the Romantic Movement. For this reason, if we want to avoid errors of imprecise systematization, it would be best to talk about Romanticism as a distinct historical and German movement.⁷ This does not mean that there were no similar movements in other European countries, nor that Romanticism should be seen as exclusively German. However, the origins of Romanticism indeed lie in Germany, its most important representatives were Germans, and it was closely related to German Idealism, which is often seen as a genuine “philosophy of the Germans.”⁸ Furthermore, in Germany, Romanticism attained “an importance which far exceeded its importance in any other country.”⁹

Not only do disputes exist concerning the definition of Romanticism, but also regarding its character and nature. “Since Rudolph Haym wrote the history of the Romantic school as a history of a literary revolution, scholars have tried to solve the puzzling problem of the character and meaning of this movement.”¹⁰ For a long time, German Romanticism was seen as a conservative movement, or, as one scholar wrote about the most important political thinker of Romanticism, Adam Müller, a “holy protest against the individualistic

Blackwell, Oxford, 1955, p. 41; Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary modernism. Technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 13.

- 7 The German character of Romanticism was championed by Georg Mehlis, who claimed that Romanticism in its essence was the product of the German spirit. Similar statements can be found in the works of Spann and his student Baxa. For Oskar Walzel, Romantics wanted to learn to feel German again and for Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, Romanticism was a will to Germanness. See: Georg Mehlis, *Die deutsche Romantik*, Rösl & Cie, München, 1922, S. 26; Oskar Walzel, *Deutsche Romantik*, B.G. Teubner, Leipzig, Berlin, 1923, S. 1.
- 8 Friedrich Romig, *Die Rechte der Nation*, Leopold Stocker Verlag, Graz, Stuttgart, 2002, S. 161.
- 9 Maurice Cranstom, *The Romantic Movement*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994, p. 47.
- 10 Aris, *Political Thought in Germany 1789–1815*, p. 209.

method of thought.”¹¹ According to Nicolas Gomez Davila, German Romanticism was, together with Italian Humanism and French Classicism, one of the greatest reactionary movements, a protest against the seizure of culture through the “pursuit of happiness.”¹² After the First World War, some German conservatives (Georg von Below, Othmar Spann) invoked the rehabilitation of the romantic spirit as a prerequisite for a German national renewal. It is thus completely understandable that many conservatives, even non-Germans, were under the strong influence of German Romanticism.

For the same reasons, German Romanticism has been severely criticized by left-wing or liberal authors, and was even accused of being reactionary, as proto-fascist and totalitarian, and thus a central element in the German “special consciousness” and their “special way”¹³ (*Sonderweg*).¹⁴ According to Georg Lukács, Romanticism played an important role in the

11 Friedrich Bülow, “Einleitung” in: Adam Müller, *Vom Geiste der Gemeinschaft*, Alfred Kröner Verlag, Leipzig, 1931, S. XVI.

12 Till Kinzel, *Nicolás Gómez Dávila, Parteigänger verlorener Sachen*, Edition Antaios, Schnellroda, 2003, S. 56.

13 For example, Goetz Briefs writes that Adam Müller developed “a totalitarian doctrine of government,” but he also adds that “it would be wrong to confound it with modern totalitarianism...” Briefs also emphasised that “Nazism ... had adopted certain Romanticist elements which had their foundation in the German south.” Goetz A. Briefs, “The Economic Philosophy of Romanticism” in: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 2, No. 3, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941, pp. 284, 299. Also see: Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The Meaning of Romanticism for the Historian of Ideas” in: Patrick Riley (ed.) *Essays on Political Philosophy*, University of Rochester Press, New York, 1992, pp. 316 – 324.

14 The negative interpretation of the German *Sonderweg* puts forward the thesis that there is continuity in German thinking from the early modern period to Hitler’s dictatorship. According to this thesis, there is a direct link from Luther (or at least Herder) to Hitler. See: Peter Viereck, *Metapolitics: From the Wagner and German Romantics to Hitler*, Routledge, London, 2017. For a critique of this thesis see: Panajotis Kondylis, “Der deutsche “Sonderweg” und die deutschen Perspektiven,” in: Panajotis Kondylis, *Das Politische im 20. Jahrhundert. Von den Utopien zur Globalisierung*, Heidelberg 2001, S. 161-180.

genesis of irrationalism and the “hate of progress.”¹⁵ This means that Romanticism was not only an immoral, but also a dangerous worldview that had to be eliminated.¹⁶ According to this interpretation, Romanticism was not only a typical product of the German mind and soul, but also the birth place of German nationalism and expansionism. Although one-sided, largely simplistic, and eventually refuted, this interpretation still finds its proponents in some left-liberal circles.

However, not all conservatives have been enthusiastic about Romanticism. Some of them have been rather skeptical about it and its legacy. According to Carl Schmitt, Romanticism was in essence “subjectified occasionalism,”¹⁷ a mere aesthetization of politics without any political energy, political creed, or convictions of its own. “As long as the Revolution is present, political romanticism is revolutionary. With the termination of the Revolution, it becomes conservative, and in a markedly reactionary restoration it also knows how to extract the romantic aspect from such circumstances. After 1830, romanticism becomes revolutionary again...”¹⁸ According to Schmitt, the Romantic subject “treats the world as an occasion and an opportunity for his Romantic productivity.”¹⁹ In short, for Schmitt, Romanticism was a part of European modernity. Similar

15 Georg Lukács, *Skizze einer Geschichte der neuen deutschen Literatur*, Aufbau Verlag, Berlin (Ost), 1955, S. 55. Also see: Georg Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, Luchterhand Verlag, Berlin-Spandau, 1962.

16 “Muller, Novalis, Fichte, Johann Josef Gorres, all play the same tune. The German people avidly listen to this martial music. It stirs their emotions. They are hypnotized by it frenzy and they follow it with brutal boots. The theme is recurrent through the ages of German development. They are familiar with it, and the leader of the day is not the inciting cause of their reactions. It is the tom-tom which calls them and to which they devote their lives finally on the battlefield.” Luis Nizer, *What to do with Germany?*, 1944, p. 38.

17 Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1986, p. 17.

18 *Ibidem*, 115.

19 *Ibidem*, 17.

criticism came from Charles Maurras, who saw Romanticism as connected to the Revolution and republicanism. For Maurras, Romanticism was synonymous with individualism, rebellion, disorder, and revolution. “Romanticism and revolution resemble nothing so much as two stems, which, though they look different, grow from the same root.”²⁰ According to Maurras’ interpretation, Romanticism had its roots in Rousseau and his individualism.²¹

ONE OR TWO ROMANTICISMS

These interpretations express such radical disagreements on the essence of the Romanticism that one has to wonder whether these scholars were talking about one and the same phenomenon: how could the same Romantic authors possibly be proponents of both individualism and collectivism (or at least “sociological method of thought”),²² of pantheism and Catholicism, of apolitical artists and fervent nationalist demagogues? How could the same basic Romantic texts be interpreted as both conservative and liberal works? No worldview can incorporate within itself radical modernity and radical opposition to modernity at the same time. Does this then mean that Romanticism was not a coherent worldview?

One possible solution could be seen in a division within the Romantic camp, such as the distinction between early and late Romanticism, between the “theoretical” and “practical,”²³ between Jena and

20 Charles Maurras “Romanticism and Revolution” in: J. S. McClelland (ed.), *The French Right: From De Maistre to Maurras*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York and Evanston, 1970, p. 239.

21 See also: Andreas A. M. Kinning, “Comment on Peter Simpson’s Political Illiberalism” in: *The American Journal of Jurisprudence*, Vol. 62, Issue 1, June 2017, pp. 89–101.

22 Georg von Below, *Die Entstehung der Soziologie*, Verlag von Gustav Fischer, Jena, 1928, S. 2–10, 24, 26.

23 Benedetto Croce, *Geschichte Europas im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, Europa Verlag, Zürich, 1935, S. 40.

Heidelberg²⁴ and Vienna... According to most of these interpretations, only early Romanticism was inspiring, fresh, rebellious, progressive, and modernistic, while late Romanticism was allegedly anti-enlightenment, religious, anti-rational, anti-modern, reactionary, and sterile. This would mean moreover that only the early period represents true Romanticism, with the later phase as something like an unworthy corrosion or abandonment of the original positions of the movement. After the Second World War, this distinction acquired a moral dimension, the early Romanticism perceived as modern, enlightened, progressive, revolutionary, and thus “good,” while late Romanticism was seen as anti-modern, conservative, counter-revolutionary, and thus “bad.” This late Romanticism was accused of “trivializing” and “falsifying” its own initial ideas.²⁵ During the 1960s, numerous authors attempted to develop this alternative image of early Romanticism, or “the other Romanticism”²⁶ by overemphasizing the division within the Romantic movement.²⁷

Of course, no-one would dispute that different phases of development of the Romantic movement indeed existed. These phases have been established before,²⁸ but if the differences were so great and even unbridgeable, how can we still talk about Romanticism as

24 See: Alfred Baeumler, “Euthanasie des Rokoko. Entdeckung der Erde und des Muttertums,” in: Gisela Dischner, Richard Faber (Hrsg.) *Romantische Utopie, Utopische Romantik*, Gerstenberg Verlag, Hildesheim, 1979, S. 37–52.

25 Wm. Arctander O’Brien, “Friedrich von Hardenberg (Pseudonym Novalis),” in: Paul Hamilton (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 206.

26 See: Helmut Schanze (Hrsg.) *Die andere Romantik. Eine Dokumentation*, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1967.

27 See: Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Die Kritik der Romantik, Der Verdacht der Philosophie gegen die literarische Moderne*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1989; Ludwig Marcuse, “Reaktionäre und progressive Romantik” in: Helmut Prang (Hg.), *Begriffsbestimmung der Romantik, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft*, Darmstadt, 1972, S. 377–385.

28 See: Paul Kluckhohn, *Persönlichkeit und Gemeinschaft, Studien zur Staatsauffassung der deutschen Romantik*, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Halle/Saale, 1925; Paul Kluckhohn, *Das Ideengut der deutschen Romantik*, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 1966.

a single phenomenon or a single movement? As we shall see later, the embryo of all later ideas was already present in the early stage.²⁹ From the very outset, Romanticism was a critique of modernity and a strong connection and continuity between the different phases can be established. Young and old Friedrich Schlegel is still the same man.

Even if we accept that there was a strong difference and even a gap between the early and the late phase, the question arises – what happened? What and when was the turning point and why were the original ideas of the movement abandoned by their proponents? Why did such an initially “progressive” movement end up on the other side? How could all Romantics have changed their mind? What could have provoked such a radical change?

One of the possible explanations offered by Ljubomir Tadić is that opportunism was the main characteristic of the social inconsistency of the German Romantics, which implies that they were only opportunists who betrayed their ideas for material reasons and went to work for Metternich in order to secure their existence.³⁰ This old-fashioned Marxist argument is rather weak and superficial, however, as there is a great deal of evidence showing that the Romantics were not unconditional supporters of Metternich, and that their relationship with the Austrian chancellor was marked not only by similarities, but also by differences and tensions.³¹

29 See: Hans-Christof Kraus, “Die Jenaer Frühromantik und ihre Kritik der Moderne,” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, Heft 3, Brill, Leiden, 1995, S. 206–230.

30 Ljubomir Tadić, *Tradicija, legitimitet i revolucija*, Zavod za udžbenike, Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2007, str. 95–96.

31 For example, the diplomatic careers of Friedrich Schlegel and Adam Müller were rather short and neither of them died as a rich man. There is also Gentz’s letter to Müller where he quotes Metternich’s remarks against the most important representatives of the late Romanticism. Friedrich Gentz, “Brief an Müller vom 20. 10. 1820.” in: Günter Kronenbitter (Hrsg.) *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band XI, Olms-Weidmann, Hildesheim, Zürich, New York, 2002, S. 330.

A different answer is offered by Frederick Beiser, who claims that the early Romantics were “neither revolutionaries nor reactionaries,” but rather “simply reformers, moderates in the classical tradition of Schiller, Humboldt, and Wieland.”³² In his opinion, the early Romantics approved of the principles and the goals of the Revolution, but disapproved of its practices. He claims that the task of the young Romantics was to educate and enlighten the people so as to prepare them for the “grand moral ideals of a republic.”³³ As we shall see, this interpretation rests upon a rather one-sided reading of Schlegel and Novalis. Also, it is not entirely clear what Beiser meant by “reactionary” or “reformers.” Certainly, Romantics were not advocates of absolutism or the *status quo*, but this still does not imply that they supported the goals of the Revolution.³⁴ Also, Beiser fails to explain why the Romantics eventually turned their backs on the ideas they had supposedly been advocating wholeheartedly.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AS THE TOUCHSTONE

In this context it is of utmost importance to re-examine the Romantic attitude towards the French Revolution, because at its

32 Frederick C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790–1800*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 229.

33 Frederick C. Beiser, *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. xv. Similar interpretation is offered by Brinkmann. See: Richard Brinkmann, “Deutsche Frühromantik und französische Revolution,” *Wirklichkeiten: Essays zur Literatur*, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 1982, S. 189–220.

34 At that time, “German Jacobins” and defenders of the “rigid holding on to the *status quo*” or even “prophets of the turning back to the long bygone state of affairs,” were only a minority among the German authors on the margins of the political discourse. Central motives of the German political thought at that time were reform – against the holding on to the present – and continuity – against the revolutionary upheaval. Hans-Christof Kraus “Kontinuität und Reform. Zur Geschichte des politischen Denkens in Deutschland zwischen Spätaufklärung und Romantik” in: *Politisches Denken Jahrbuch*, Dunker & Humblot, Berlin, 2015, S. 184–185.

time the Revolution was a touchstone for every philosophy, and every philosopher had to make his stand. In other words, the dilemma of how modern or anti-modern the Romantic movement really was can be resolved based on their attitude towards the Revolution. Relatedly, we can also examine if there was some continuity between the phases and if the later counter-revolutionary ideas were already anticipated in the early stage.

Those authors who have claimed that the Romantics were supporters of the ideology of the Revolution to begin with, but later changed their opinion, fail to see the historical context. Not only the Romantics, but many of their contemporaries all across Europe also supported the Revolution at first, and many of them changed their opinion sooner or later. It was also the case with many conservatives, such as De Bonald and Coleridge, and Friedrich Gentz, August Wilhelm Rehberg, and Ernst Brandes among the Germans – at least in the period 1789–1790. Some Germans, like Christian Garve, were so puzzled by events unfolding in France that they changed their minds several times, finally turning their back on the Revolution. In this context, initial support does not stand for much.

On the other hand, the Romantics were primarily very young men (most of them were born between 1767 and 1775) at that time, some mere teenagers, who reacted emotionally to the Revolution, and who romanticized it without knowing much about it nor its goals. For example, Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel were only 17 years old when the Bastille was stormed. “To precocious youth, starting out on the great adventure of self-realisation, the spectacle of a whole nation engaged on the same task came like a draught of water to the thirsty throat.”³⁵ Likewise, the young Romantics were still children of their own time, educated and socialized in the world of the Enlightenment. It is true that they, just as many of their fellow citizens, were dissatisfied with the social order of the absolutist German states and turned

35 G. P. Gooch, *Germany and the French Revolution*, Longmans, Green and co, New York, 1927, p. 230.

against that order and *status quo*. The first generation of Romantics excitedly awaited all the news from Paris and closely followed the experiment which was said to promise a new world. It is perfectly understandable that the Revolution played an important role in the lives of these young people, who realized they were living in an age of profound changes. However, this enthusiasm for the Revolution was not ideological but aesthetic and related to the Romantic inclination for everything authentic, unusual, or strange. For them, the Revolution was a gigantic drama and a large-scale experiment and they quickly understood the universal importance of this event.

As representative examples, three of the most important figures of German Romanticism, all turned their back on the Revolution after expressing initial approval.

LUDWIG TIECK

A typical example of the Romantic attitude towards the Revolution can be found in the letter of Ludwig Tieck to his friend Wilhelm Wackenroder from 1792: "Oh! To be in France! It must be a glorious experience to fight under Dumouriez, to send the slaves flying, and even to fall; for what is life without liberty? I salute the genius of Greece, which I see hovering over Gaul. France is now my thought day and night."³⁶ Tieck salutes the Revolution, and he calls the Germans then fighting against France barbarians, in doing so sympathizing with the enemies of his country. Tieck also fantasized about being in France and taking part in the glorious events over there, but he did not express anything regarding the goals or ideas of the revolution. At that time, he believed that rulers outside of Prussia were more freedom-loving,³⁷ which shows that Tieck knew little about the

36 Ludwig Tieck, "Tieck an Wackenroder (28. 12. 1792)" in: Claus Träger (Hrsg.) *Die Französische Revolution im Spiegel der Deutschen Literatur*, Verlag Philipp Reclam jun. Leipzig, 1975, S. 376.

37 Roger Paulin, *Ludwig Tieck. Eine literarische Biographie*, C. H. Beck, München, 1988, S. 36.

actual political situation in Europe. In Göttingen he called himself a democrat and declaimed freedom and equality. He still supported the Revolution after the September massacres, and in 1795 expressed his dislike for the French emigrants. In other words, Tieck's enthusiasm for the Revolution was detached from the reality of France.

Yet, this enthusiasm was short-lived, with Tieck soon turning away from the Revolution. In his novel *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798), Tieck gave expression to his disinterest in politics. Years later he explained that this had all been merely a youthful mistake.³⁸ For the most part, Tieck was never political in nature and his interest in the Revolution was purely aesthetic.

NOVALIS

Novalis held similar enthusiasm towards the Revolution as a young man. In one of his letters to Schlegel from 1794, he wrote: "I only wish to heaven that my wedding night were a Bartholomew night for despotism and prisons; then I would really have a happy marriage to celebrate. My heart is heavy that the chains are not yet falling like the walls of Jericho."³⁹ Like Tieck, he did not mind the revolutionary terror and in his enthusiasm he wrote: "Things are now being realized which ten years ago were consigned to the philosophical madhouse."⁴⁰ Yet, his idea of the Revolution had more to do with the world of unbridled fantasies and endless possibilities than with actual political goals and principles. He was deeply conscious of the fact that he was living in an interesting time, when the old world of bureaucratic absolutism was collapsing and the new one was not yet born. Even later Novalis retained his interest in the Revolution, reading revolutionary journals such as *Moniteur*. Yet, "this feverish

38 Baxa, *Einführung in die romantische Staatswissenschaft*, S. 262.

39 Novalis, (Friedrich von Hardenberg), "Hardenberg an Friedrich Schlegel (1. 8. 1794)" in: Helmut Schanze (Hrsg.) *Die andere Romantik. Eine Dokumentation*, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1967, S. 31.

40 Ibidem

mood melted away, and the conservative temperament of the poet asserted itself.”⁴¹ Soon, Novalis proved to be an anti-revolutionary writer.

He changed his views sometime around 1797. He was not a republican anymore, but a monarchist.⁴² His attitude towards the Revolution had probably changed under the influence of Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. In *Pollen* (1798), Novalis mentioned Burke explicitly. “Many anti-revolutionary books have been written for the Revolution. But Burke has written a revolutionary book against the Revolution.”⁴³ At that time, Novalis connected the Revolution with philistinism and saw it as a product of philistinism, meaning egoism, and utilitarianism. “The worst among them are revolutionary philistines, to which belongs the dregs of the progressive minds, the greedy ilk. Gross self-interest is the miserable result of a pathetic narrowness. For a wretch the present passing sensation is the most lively, the highest. He knows nothing higher than this. It is no wonder that the intellect, trained *par force* by external circumstances, is only the clever slave of such obtuse master, plotting and catering for only his whims.”⁴⁴ In *Pollen*, Novalis described the Revolution as “a crisis of emerging puberty.”⁴⁵

In his fragments Novalis also drew interesting connections and associated monarchy with the Catholic Church and democracy with Protestantism.⁴⁶

A year later, in his fragments *Faith and Love; or, the King and Queen*, Novalis expressed his monarchism. “The king is the pure life

41 Gooch, *Germany and the French Revolution*, p. 235.

42 Kluckhohn, *Persönlichkeit und Gemeinschaft*, S. 49–50.

43 Novalis, *Blüthenstaub* in: Jakob Minor (Hrsg.) *Novalis Schriften*, Zweiter Band, Verlag bei Eugen Dieberichs, Jena, 1907, no. 104, S. 136. For English translation of the texts by Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel see: Frederick C. Beiser, *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

44 *Ibidem*, no. 77. S. 130–131.

45 *Ibidem*, no. 105, S. 137.

46 *Ibidem*, no. 137, S. 143–144.

principle of the state, just like the sun in the planetary system.”⁴⁷ Not only did he argue for a revival of traditional monarchism, but he inevitably referred to the French Revolution: “A collapsing throne is like a falling mountain that shatters the plain. It leaves behind a dead sea where there was once a fertile earth and happy dwellings.”⁴⁸ When the natural order with its hierarchies falls down, the “happy dwellings” perish. The result of the revolutionary disorder is a “dead sea” of equalization. However, Novalis did not defend every hierarchy as such, nor every kind of inequality. “Make all mountains the same height and the sea will be grateful to you.”⁴⁹ Yet, once again he readily warned against any kind of radicalization, revolutionary zeal, and intervention into the social body. “Nevertheless, we should be warned against stepping on sulphuric gravel; otherwise, there will be a volcano there and with it the germ of the new continent.”⁵⁰

Monarchism of Novalis was connected with his critique of democracy. Obviously, Novalis was not a democrat and he did not believe in the rule of the majority. For him, democracy represented the rule of mediocrity and it opened the way to partisan demagogues and eventually disorder and anarchy. He even prefers the despotism of the one to the democratic despotism and partisan struggle of the other: “It is obvious that the one cannot compose from dead matter any living body; and that from unjust, selfish and partisan nothing just, unselfish and liberal can be fashioned. Of course, that is an error of a partisan majority, and a long time will elapse before one becomes convinced of this simple truth. . . . The despotism of the single individual is superior to this despotism in that at least one saves time and effort when one has to deal with the government. The former plays with an open deck, while the latter one does not know who exactly is the government and in which way the

47 Novalis, *Glauben und Liebe oder der König und die Königin*, in: Jakob Minor (Hrsg.) *Novalis Schriften*, Zweiter Band, Verlag bei Eugen Dieberichs, Jena, 1907, no. 11, S. 150.

48 Ibidem, no. 5, S. 148.

49 Ibidem, no. 6, S. 148

50 Ibidem

most advantageous policy is to be pursued.”⁵¹ In this fragment, Novalis challenges Rousseau’s defense of democracy and with it the founding principle and justification of the French Revolution.

In *Faith and Love*, Novalis once again underlined the connection between the spirit of the revolution and philistinism. “Those who nowadays declaim against princes as such, who affirm salvation only in the new French manner, who recognize even a republic only under a representative form, and who dogmatically maintain that there is a republic only where there are primary and elective assemblies, directories and committees, municipalities and liberty trees – they are miserable philistines, empty in spirit and poor in heart, and mere pedants who attempt to conceal their shallowness and inner weakness behind the colorful banner of the latest pompous fashion and under the imposing mask of cosmopolitanism.”⁵² In this fragment Novalis not only criticizes revolutionaries and demagogues as philistines, pedants, and slaves of letters, but he also expresses a typically romantic idea of the synthesis of the monarchy and republic. In other words, a real republic, which for him means a community of the people, is possible only within a true monarchy and under the fatherly figure of the king. Republic and king are indivisible, like body and soul, and a republic without a king is just an empty word without meaning, just as is a king without a republic.⁵³ As Friedrich Schlegel before him, Novalis used the word “republic” as synonymous with the ethos of the community⁵⁴ and togetherness, while the state was understood in the traditional way as a greater family. Thus, his idea of the republic had nothing to do with its modern, i.e., revolutionary, understanding of this concept. For him, republic was something like a great family where the king and queen should be seen as father and mother of the state. This patriarchal model had little in common with mechanistic absolutist monarchy or with the

51 Ibidem, no. 54, S. 168-169.

52 Ibidem, no. 17, S. 152-153.

53 Ibidem, no. 16, S. 152.

54 Kluckhohn, *Das Ideengut der deutschen Romantik*, S. 87, 93.

individualistic approach of the revolutionaries, or with their ideas of freedom and equality. Novalis stood firm on the grounds of the traditional understanding of the state. Furthermore, Novalis clearly argued that the French attempt to establish a spirit of community without any common tradition, but with only the help of “liberty trees” and invented institutions such as directories and committees was disastrous. In other words, community could never be invented or created anew, as it was the intended by the French revolutionaries. In this way, Novalis again showed his debt to Burke and his critique of the constructivist rationalism of the Revolutionaries.

Same as in *Pollen*, Novalis once again described the Revolution as puberty, with young people standing on the side of democracy, while the more established father of the household stands on the side of the monarchy: “Perhaps in certain years we all love revolutions, free competition, elections and similar democratic phenomena. But for most those years soon pass, and we feel ourselves drawn by a more peaceful world where a central sun leads the dance, and where one prefers to be a planet rather than to fight a destructive battle for a first dance.”⁵⁵ Revolution was thus for Novalis something like the rebellion of youth. It can be an inevitable and even understandable phenomenon, but still negative and unproductive. “Just as it is perhaps necessary that at certain intervals everything be brought into flux to create new necessary mixture and new purer crystallisation, so it is also indispensable to alleviate a crisis and to prevent total dissolution, so that a branch, a seed, remains from which a new plant can grow and form beautiful branch.”⁵⁶ Novalis wanted to save the essence of this order and prevent its total destruction. He wanted to avert the “softening of the bones.” Obviously, Novalis would have not wanted the Revolution to enter into Prussia.

In his well-known essay, *Christianity or Europe* (1799) Novalis articulated his assessment of then recent history and his critique

55 Novalis, *Glauben und Liebe*, no. 55, S. 169.

56 *Ibidem*, no. 15, S. 152.

of modernity as a whole. Many researchers have argued that this essay is “one of the most important literary documents of the great counterrevolutionary and revivalist movement which set in after the French Revolution and which found expression in such political phenomena as the Holy Alliance.”⁵⁷ Confronted with the world of revolutionary anarchy, Novalis turned back with longing to history and the idealized medieval, Christian tradition: “Those were beautiful, magnificent times, when Europe was a Christian land, when *one* Christianity dwelled on this civilized continent, and when *one* common interest joined the most distant provinces of this vast spiritual empire.”⁵⁸ Novalis explored the roots of the forces behind the Revolution going back to the Reformation. In this essay he denounced Protestantism, the Enlightenment, Deism, and the Revolution alike, as attempts to interrupt organic development. He also condemned them as destroyers of the religious spirit and the sense of the Sacred, which, in his opinion, flourished during medieval times. Losing this sense of the Sacred or the religious sense meant the profanation and banalization of the life. Once again, he emphasized that this Revolution was the product of the spirit of philistinism, rationalism, utilitarianism, and, finally, egoism: “The result of the modern manner of thinking one called ‘philosophy,’ and regarded it as anything opposed to the old order, especially therefore as any whim contrary

57 Aris, *Political Thought in Germany 1789–1815*, p. 274. Similar interpretation is to be found by Wilhelm Dilthey, Friedrich Meinecke, Wilhelm Metzger and Paul Kluckhohn. See: Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung*, Verlag B.G. Teubner Leipzig und Berlin 1922, S. 298; Friedrich Meinecke, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*, von R. Oldenbourg, Berlin München, 1928, S. 75; Wilhelm Metzger, *Gesellschaft, Recht und Staat in der Ethik des deutschen Idealismus*, Carl Winter Verlag, Heidelberg, 1917, S. 251; Kluckhohn, *Das Ideengut der deutschen Romantik*, S. 95. There are also contrary interpretations, for example: Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism*, pp. 275–277. Some of them went so far to refer to *Christianity or Europe* as a “joke.” O’Brien, “Friedrich von Hardenberg (Pseudonym Novalis),” p. 215.

58 Novalis, *Die Christenheit oder Europa*, in: Jakob Minor (Hrsg.) *Novalis Schriften*, Zweiter Band, Verlags bei Eugen Dieberichs, Jena, 1907, S. 22.

to religion. The original personal hatred against the Catholic faith gradually became a hatred of the Bible, of Christian belief, and finally of all religion. Furthermore, the hatred of religion extended very naturally and consistently to all objects of enthusiasm, disparaging fantasy and feeling, morality and the love of art, the future and past. This new philosophy placed man of necessity at the top of the series of natural beings, and made the infinite creative music of the cosmos into the uniform clattering of a gigantic mill – a mill in itself driven by and swimming in the stream of chance, without architect or miller, a genuine *Perpetuum mobile*, a self-grinding mill.”⁵⁹ The Revolution was thus just the final stage of a process which had begun long ago, a natural outcome of the modern hatred of religion. In other words, post-revolutionary chaos and war were just logical consequences of this general condition and spiritual weakness. “Where there are no gods, phantoms rule.”⁶⁰ Slogans of the Revolution such as equality, freedom, or sovereignty of the people were for Novalis these very phantoms and surrogates for true religion and the sovereignty of God.

Novalis dismissed the idea of the sovereignty of man and with it the purely secular solutions to political and social problems as superficial. Spiritual crisis demanded spiritual solutions. Harmony and order could not be established by revolutionary means and the revolutionary was to Novalis something like Sisyphus. “Does not the revolutionary seem like Sisyphus to him? Now he has reached the summit only for his mighty burden to roll down again. It will never stay on top unless an attraction toward heaven keeps it balanced there.”⁶¹ Thus, in order to arrest the process of decay, a visible Church had to be restored. Novalis explicitly stated that the earthly pillars were too weak and only a renewed church could provide a connection to the heavens. He also placed his hopes not in France, but in

59 Ibidem, S. 33.

60 Ibidem, S. 40.

61 Ibidem, S. 36.

Germany as a leader of spiritual renovation. According to Novalis, after the puberty of the Revolution would come a return to religion and the rejuvenation of the order as it had been during the middle ages.

In other fragments, Novalis showed similar tendencies. He defended nobility as “the moral faculty” in the State⁶² and spoke out against the ideas of natural equality and freedom. “All men are by nature only relatively equal, which in fact is the old inequality, the stronger has also a stronger right. Likewise, men are not by nature free, but only more or less bound.”⁶³ In this way, Novalis undermined the theory of natural rights and with it the main principles of the Revolution. He also negated the whole concept of the social contract. “The need of the state is the most pressing need of a person. To become and remain a person one has need of a state.”⁶⁴ For him an individual became a person only within the organic community, i.e., within the state. Hence there could be no stateless society or Rousseauian state of nature. Once again, Novalis had identified the republic with the spirit of community. “This is of course better in republics, where the state is the chief concern of every person. The life and needs, the activity and viewpoints, of everyone are bound up with the life and needs, the activity and viewpoints, of a more powerful and wide society; a person feels his life connected to a more potent life, and so his fantasy and intellect are broadened with, and exercised by, greater objects.”⁶⁵

Starting in 1797 Novalis was clearly a critic of the Revolution, its principles, and modernity as a whole. This opposition is visible in all of his works. If as a young man he showed some enthusiasm

62 Novalis, *Fragmente vermischten Inhalts (aus den Schlegel-Tieckischen Ausgaben)*, in: Jakob Minor (Hrsg.) *Novalis Schriften*, Zweiter Band, Verlag bei Eugen Dieberichs, Jena, 1907, no. 290, S. 270.

63 Novalis, *Fragmente (Nachlass von Bülow)*, in: Jakob Minor (Hrsg.) *Novalis Schriften*, Dritter Band, Verlag bei Eugen Dieberichs, Jena, 1907, no. 490, S. 108-109.

64 Novalis, *Fragmente vermischten Inhalts*, no. 295, S. 272.

65 Novalis, *Fragmente (Nachlass von Bülow)*, no. 202, S. 40.

for the Revolution and the republic, he grew rather quickly to be a monarchist. As Rudolf Haym stated, all the main ideas of the later romantic theory of the state are to be found in his aphorisms.⁶⁶ In this way, Novalis is the father of romantic conservatism.

FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL

Another example of the romantic anti-revolutionary and the conservative viewpoint is Friedrich Schlegel. Together with his brother August Wilhelm he was the most influential member of the Romantic movement not only in the early stage, but also in the late phase of Romanticism. Alongside Adam Müller he was the main figure of conservative Romanticism in Vienna and one of the leading voices in the age of the European Restoration.

However, young Schlegel was commonly characterized as a “Jacobin” who “hailed the revolution wholeheartedly and retained his enthusiasm for it longer than most of his fellow Romantics.”⁶⁷ Yet, this interpretation is not entirely correct. Schlegel showed little interest in politics before he met Carolina Böhmer, through whom he came in touch with ideas of Georg Forster. His serious interest in politics did not begin until the summer of 1793⁶⁸ and it went on to become his main preoccupation. He was a disciple of Fichte, studied the works of Rousseau and Kant, and followed the unfolding events in France. At that time, Schlegel advocated for the idea of the republic, but not necessarily the Revolution.

In his famous review of Kant’s *Perpetual Peace*, which was published under the name *Essay on the Concept of Republicanism occasioned by the Kantian tract “Perpetual Peace”* in 1796, and which was widely considered as an example of “other” (meaning “liberal”)

66 Rudolf Haym, *Die romantische Schule*, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, Berlin, 1906, S. 344.

67 Aris, *Political Thought in Germany 1789–1815*, p. 281.

68 Harro Zimmermann, *Friedrich Schlegel oder die Sehnsucht nach Deutschland*, Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn, 2009. S. 67.

Romanticism,⁶⁹ Schlegel did not mention the Revolution nor the developments in France. There is no doubt that he was a democrat at that time, who believed that a republic was by necessity democratic. “Equality and freedom demand that the *general will* be the basis of all particular political activities (not only the laws, but also their application and execution). But just this is the character of *republicanism*. ... *Republicanism is therefore necessarily democratic*.”⁷⁰ Yet his democratism was inspired by ancient Greece and stood in the tradition of the ancient polis and *res publica* in the traditional sense, and not with the French Revolution.⁷¹ Like Novalis, Schlegel understood the republic as synonymous with community. In this text Schlegel advocated direct democracy, which was again inspired by an ancient polis and democracy without division of power.

Schlegel also challenged Kant’s veto on insurrection and even supported it as a means to establish a republic. “Insurrection is not politically impossible or absolutely illegitimate ... Hence that insurrection is *legitimate* whose motive is the destruction of the constitution, whose government is a merely provisional organ, and whose goal is the organization of republicanism.”⁷² Although this may sound like a vindication of the French Revolution, Schlegel is still on the ground of the traditional understanding of the polis. Insurrection against despotism was legitimate, because despotism, as he defined it, was the negation of the state.

Although a democrat, Schlegel was no blind doctrinaire. He condemned ochlocracy and described it as the “despotism of the majority” and, along with tyranny, as the “greatest physical evil.”⁷³

69 Schanze, *Die andere Romantik*.

70 Friedrich Schlegel, *Versuch über den Begriff des Republikanismus; veranlaßt durch Kantische Schrift zum ewigen Frieden*, in: Ernst Behler (Hrsg.) *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Band 7, Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, München, Paderbon, Wien, 1966, S. 15, 17.

71 Zimmermann, *Friedrich Schlegel*, S. 89; Hans-Christof Kraus, “Die Jenaer Frühromantik und ihre Kritik der Moderne,” S. 281.

72 Schlegel, *Versuch über den Begriff des Republikanismus*, S. 24-25.

73 Ibidem, S. 19.

Schlegel even equalized Sans-culottism with the Neros of the world.

At the same time, Schlegel's essay contained a number of interesting and unexpected moments, such as praise for the British constitution: "With regard to the *community of morals*, the political culture of the modern state is in a state of infancy compared to the ancient; and no state has reached a greater degree of freedom and equality than the British."⁷⁴ It is interesting that Schlegel explicitly mentioned England and not revolutionary France. At that time, Britain was in war with France and no "Jacobin" would praise the British constitution. One has to keep in mind Burke's contrasting of the British order and the organic, gradual development of its institutions with the French Revolution. All German friends of the Revolution thought at that time that England was a threat to the freedom of the European nations. On the other hand, German conservatives like Rehberg, Brandes, and later Adam Müller were advocates of the British constitution.

Schlegel's definition of the state was also plainly not Jacobin. "[T]he State comprises an uninterrupted *mass*, a coexistent and successive *continuum* of human beings, the *totality* of which stand in relation of physical influence to one another, e.g. all inhabitants in a country, all descendants of a family."⁷⁵ This emphasizing of successive continuity illustrates a clear break with an individualistic natural law theory of the Enlightenment and similarity with Burke's views. This break with individualism and the social contract theory of the Enlightenment is also evident in his words: "The proposition 'the *ego should be*' means in this specific case 'the *community of humanity should be*' or 'the *ego should be communicated*."⁷⁶ Here Schlegel laid the foundations of his organic understanding of the relationship between the individual and the state. Schlegel argues that the individu-

74 Ibidem, S. 17. Some authors claim that the term British is most probably a printer's error and that it should be replaced with the term Attic. See: Beiser, *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, pp. 103–104.

75 Schlegel, *Versuch über den Begriff des Republikanismus*, S. 15.

76 Ibidem

al does not exist prior to the community of which he is a part – even less so without the community or against the community. Actually, an individual needs a community in order to develop his personality. Hence, there can be no stateless “state of nature.” This critique of social contract theory later played an important role in the Romantic theory of the state as it was developed by Adam Müller.⁷⁷

In short, the writer of the *Concept of Republicanism* was a republican and democrat in the tradition of the ancient model, not an ardent supporter of the French Revolution.

In his *Athenaeum* fragments (1798), Schlegel on several occasions mentions the Revolution explicitly and his skepticism towards the Revolution is clearly visible. “The French Revolution, Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, and Goethe’s *Meister* are the greatest tendencies of the age. Whoever is offended by this juxtaposition, whoever takes seriously only a revolution that is noisy and materialistic, has still not elevated themselves to the broader, higher perspective on the history of mankind,”⁷⁸ remarked Schlegel in his famous fragment. But what does this mean? Similar to Novalis and even to Burke, Schlegel viewed the Revolution as an important intellectual force and not merely a historical event, or a matter of France’s internal affairs. Like Burke and Novalis, Schlegel indicated no interest in the noisy and materialistic side of the Revolution, but rather he wanted to go beyond these simple bounds and explore its deeper layers and its spiritual background. For him the Revolution was not just a local rebellion, but a European tendency. His stating that the Revolution was the tendency of the age does not automatically imply that it held a positive value. His apparent sentiment was that even those who were against the Revolution should understand its true and universal meaning in order to fight against it. Moreover, Schlegel

77 Adam Müller, *Die Elemente der Staatskunst*, Haude & Spenersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Berlin, 1939.

78 Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenäumsfragmente*, in: Jakob Minor (Hrsg.) *Friedrich Schlegel 1794–1802, seine prosaischen Jugendschriften*, Band 2, Verlag von Carl Konegen, Wien, 1882, no. 216, S. 236.

compared the Revolution with a worldwide earthquake or a flood, before continuing further: "One can regard the French Revolution as the greatest and most remarkable phenomenon in the history of states, as an almost universal earthquake, as an immeasurable flood in the political world, or as the model of revolutions, as *the* revolution. These are usual standpoints. But one can also regard it as the centre and summit of French national character, in which all its paradoxes are compressed together; or as the most horrible grotesque of the age where the most profound prejudices and their most powerful forebodings are mixed together in a terrible chaos and woven together bizarrely as possible into a gigantic tragicomedy of humanity."⁷⁹ Schlegel was conscious of the possible critiques of the Revolution and was himself far from any kind of enthusiast.

In his *Athenaeum* fragments, Schlegel broke with his previous democratism and egalitarianism.⁸⁰ His republic was not necessarily democratic anymore, but a synthesis of democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy. "The perfect republic must be not only democratic but also aristocratic and monarchical."⁸¹

Schlegel's critic of the Revolution became even more apparent in *Ideas* (1799), where he wrote: "There is no greater need of the moment than a spiritual counterweight against the Revolution, and against the despotism that is exercised over minds by the concentration of the highest worldly interests. Where should we seek and find this counterweight? The answer is not difficult. Indisputably, within ourselves."⁸² Schlegel saw a kind of despotism within the Revolution and was seeking a counterweight. Since the Revolution was a spiritual tendency of the age, its counterweight also had to be spiritual and to come from within. In other words, Schlegel's fight against the

79 Ibidem, no. 424, S. 281.

80 Ibidem, no. 81, S. 215; no. 212, S. 236.

81 Ibidem, no. 214, S. 236.

82 Friedrich Schlegel, *Ideen*, in: Jakob Minor (Hrsg.) *Friedrich Schlegel 1794–1802, seine prosaischen Jugendschriften*, Band 2, Verlag von Carl Konegen, Wien, 1882, no. 41. S. 293.

Revolution and its despotism was not material, but spiritual. It was a fight against materialism, rationalism, and egoism. This implied that the problem of the Revolution had to be solved not in the realm of politics, but in the realms of the spirit, science, and art.⁸³ Once again, the parallels with the thoughts of Novalis are noticeable. The revolution is understood as a product of the philistinism, materialism, utilitarianism, and egoism and the revolutionary as Sisyphus.

In *Ideas*, Schlegel also distanced himself not only from the Revolution, but from the world of politics as well. In his fragments he advised Novalis not to squander his faith and love on the political world, but to sacrifice his inner self to the world of science and art in a holy firestorm of eternal creation.⁸⁴ This sentiment was in clear accordance with his idea of spiritual and religious renovation.

Just like Novalis and his brother August Wilhelm, in his fragments from *Philosophical Apprenticeship* (1796–1806), Schlegel also celebrated the Middle Ages: “Never was there more freedom, equality and fraternity than in the Middle Ages – and these were their best in Germany. The great alliances, the trails of the peasants, the Swiss, the Hansa, the free cities, the law of the club. The best in the state then was the masculinity, the friendship.”⁸⁵ Once again, the normative model was not revolutionary France, but the traditional order of the German Middle Ages, not centralization and universal rationalization, not organization from the top, but a diversity of the local autonomous bodies and even the law of the club (Faustrecht). Schlegel praised the order that the Revolution sought to abolish and would have liked to see it replaced with a new enlightened, rationalistic model. This is in accordance with Schlegel’s words about British constitution from *The Concept of Republicanism*, as Britain was at that time seen as a shining example of the organic development of the

83 Baxa, *Einführung in die romantische Staatswissenschaft*, S. 72.

84 Schlegel, *Ideen* no. 106. S. 300

85 Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophische Lehrjahre 1796–1806*, Teil I, in: Ernst Behler (Hrsg.) *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Band 18, Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, München, Paderborn, Wien, 1963, no. 1255. S. 299.

medieval order and its traditions.

In these fragments Schlegel also mentioned the critics of the Revolution. "The most vulgar opponents of the Revolution, who detest it as a diabolical chaos, are much better than those who get involved in principles."⁸⁶ He also called it "the tragic arabesque of the time,"⁸⁷ and explicitly praised Burke.

By the end of 1790s, Schlegel had become a staunch critic of the French Revolution. Also, he had turned away from his democracy and strongly emphasized aristocratic and conservative elements in his writings. In his later texts he developed and articulated conservative political theory. In 1808, together with his wife, Schlegel converted to Roman-Catholicism.

CONCLUSION

The story about Romantic enthusiasm for the Revolution in the early phase is largely exaggerated. At its most extreme, this enthusiasm was only aesthetic in nature, without any clear political program behind it. Also, already in the early stage, Romantics had challenged individualistic natural right theory and social contract theory, undermining the principles of the Revolution. They understood the state not as a rationally constructed machine, but as an organic community, a big family with the king as its father. Their concept of the republic was not revolutionary at its roots, but synonymous with the ethos of community. In this early phase, conservative, anti-egalitarian, and generally anti-modern elements were already present, and they would be further developed and articulated in the later stages.

Romanticism as a movement came into existence as a protest against the Enlightenment, Individualism, one-sided Rationalism, utilitarianism, mechanical approach to life, and the growing secularization. It was an attempt to rebuild a new religious stance and to

86 *Ibidem*, no. 591. S. 77.

87 *Ibidem*, no. 380. S. 57.

preserve the organic unity of the world. In other words, Romanticism was an anti-modern movement from the outset. “In its essence, Romanticism was a radical and fundamental critique of the core principle of modernity, of the thesis that the autonomy of the 'rational subject' makes the fundamental principle of human thought and praxis, that the thinking subject is 'autonomous,' (which means independent from all natural, religious or social determinedness) and that it is not only possible, but also legitimate to act according to principles of pure thinking in all spheres – most importantly in the sphere of politics – and to shape and 'construct' reality in accordance with these principles of the pure thinking.”⁸⁸ Thus, Romanticism was bound to turn against the Revolution sooner or later and not just against its methods but against its goals. This implicit anti-revolutionary position was evident already in the early phase and when the Romantics came to know the Revolution and its goals, they turned against it. As proponents of “qualitative” or “aristocratic” individualism Romantics were bound to be anti-egalitarian thinkers. They saw Revolution as a sad, but logical outcome of the process which had started a long ago with the Reformation, Secularization, and eventually the Enlightenment. Hence, not only were Romantics against the Revolution, but they also offered “alternative visions for a Europe shaken by revolutionary developments and radical restructuring in politics, science, philosophy, economics and organized religion.”⁸⁹ This vision was developed by the late Romantics analogous to the ideas which had already been postulated at the early stage with their rehabilitation of the middle ages. In this sense, there can be no strict line which could be invoked to separate early and late Romanticism one from another. Rather, one can only speak of the different phases

88 Hans-Christof, Kraus, “Romantik, politische” in: Caspar von Schrenck-Notzing (Hrsg.) *Lexikon des Konservatismus*, Leopold Stocker Verlag, Graz, Stuttgart, 1996, S. 465–466.

89 Dennis F. Mahony, “Heidelberg, Dresden, Berlin, Vienna” in: Paul Hamilton (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 354.

within the same process, or of “the moving of the accent” (Kluckhohn). From its beginning, the Romanticism was an anti-modern and thus an anti-revolutionary movement.

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