

*The pursuit of the subject: literature as critic
and perfecter of philosophy 1790–1830*

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In 1798 the Romantic writer Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) boldly reduced the age in which he lived to three dominant tendencies.¹ That the French Revolution, the most significant single political and cultural development in modernity, should be written large no one then or now would dispute. Alongside this historical cataclysm, however, Schlegel ranks phenomena from the republic of letters: a philosophy, Johann Gottlieb Fichte's 'Wissenschaftslehre' (theory of knowledge); and a literary work, the novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795–6; *Wilhelm Meister's years of apprenticeship*) by Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832). Schlegel's intention, of course, is to emphasise and provoke. But he clearly intends a fundamental relation between the Revolution, philosophy and literature in our epoch. Of what kind? The age around 1800, it will be argued with Schlegel, was one in which literature and philosophy self-consciously co-operated and competed for Germany's intellectual leadership. The Revolution ultimately determined their relationship. Both literature and philosophy sought words to express its meaning. Both hoped to launch actions out of those words.

The Revolution then as now was in fact seen philosophically – as the fulfilment of the project of Enlightenment, which Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) had famously defined as the emergence of humanity from its self-imposed tutelage, that is, as a race of fully self-conscious free beings. Concretely, as Kant said, Enlightenment meant rampant criticism – of all received forms of thought and action – by the new authority in matters of truth: human reason (*KrV*, 13n). The public sphere, in which matters of dispute might be settled not by appeal to received authority (religion, the state, tradition) but according to agreed, transparent rules of rational debate, had for the first time in Germany begun to constitute itself in the life of the middle classes,² in the form of literary and philosophical journals, reading clubs and the like. Here, and not just in the universities, the thinking of knowledge, morality, art, politics and above all religion was

cast for the first time in recognisably modern form. With its replacement of the traditional form of the state by a representative constitution and a republic, and of Christian religion by the official cult of the supreme being *qua* reason, the Revolution in France (if not in Germany) seemed to mark the translation of Enlightenment theory into practice. It seemed to fulfil the long-cherished project of the French *philosophes*, to embody the final, anthropocentric re-ordering of human affairs. The full significance of this – perhaps because of the widespread Burkean rejection of political violence – was only beginning to be grasped in Germany. All this Schlegel encapsulates in his dictum. But where did Fichte and Goethe, philosophy and literature, seek to lead the tendencies of the Revolution? To share their common yet divergent vision, only hinted at in Schlegel's lapidary commentary, we must first turn to the unnamed authority on whose monumental achievement their work rests, and through whom the significance of the Revolution was mediated to Germany: Kant.

Kant had not only included the term 'critical' in his philosophy's title, suggesting that it drew the sum of Enlightenment philosophical endeavour, but also characterised his system metaphorically (and with calculated political implications) as a Copernican revolutionary shift in philosophical thought (*KrV*, 23, 25, 28). His philosophy is revolutionary in that he grounds three major fields of philosophical endeavour – epistemology, ethics and aesthetics – in a radically new way which provides the intellectual signature of the epoch around 1800 and of modernity: in *subjectivity*.³ But for his successors Kant's account of subjectivity – despite its axial function in the system – raised as many problems as it solved. Fichte and Goethe represent the main philosophical and literary tendencies of the age not only because they take up the pursuit of the subject as the key to humanity's self-understanding in our epoch of Revolution, but also because they see philosophical and aesthetic discourse, with their distinctively differing modes of talk, as competing for the prize. This chapter charts the progress of that chase – as a dialogue between the epoch's great philosophical movement, the idealism of Kant, Fichte and Schelling, and its literary counterparts, the classicism and Romanticism of Goethe, Schiller, Schlegel, Hardenberg-Novalis and others. At the end of that dialogue stands the system of perhaps the ultimate philosopher of subjectivity, Hegel.

The problem of subjectivity arises for Kant because of his dissatisfaction with traditional metaphysics, which he thought relied on excessively self-confident use of deductive rationality. He therefore submitted reason itself to criticism and the subject to unprecedented logical dissection. In

order to guarantee the scientific status of knowledge claims (including metaphysical ones), an alternative, more reliable epistemological model was required. In the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1780, 1787; *Critique of pure reason*) the experimental procedures of truth finding in mathematics and natural science seemed to offer just that, and so to reveal the conditions under which propositions might claim necessarily to be true. The geometrician Thales had for example understood that all certain knowledge of the triangle's properties derived paradoxically not from empirical (a posteriori) investigation of the thing, but from the concepts he himself had already formulated independently of experience (a priori); indeed, triangles not being given in nature, he had to refer to a priori concepts to construct the thing in the first place (*KrV*, 22). Galileo knew empirical observation to be indispensable in natural science. But he also knew that observation can only be adequately judged by principles of enquiry grounded in reason. Reason in natural science is to this extent counter-intuitive: not the pupil, but the judge of nature. Reason dictates theoretical questions for nature to answer, secure in the knowledge that, as in geometry, reason can only grasp that which reason itself has already projected (23f.) – even if only nature can answer the questions. Before any metaphysical enquiry can begin, then, the task of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* is to explain the conditions under which a priori cognition, with its characteristic certainty, general validity and independence of experience, is possible: how the laws of nature are founded not in nature, but in the structure of human reason, not in the object, but in the *subject*.

Obviously, the key to transcendental philosophy lies in the functions attributed to the thinking subject, but precisely here problems arise. The first task is to clarify the relation of the a priori and the empirical in the constitution of experience, which Kant briskly defines as having cognitive character. He sees only two sources of knowledge: sensuality and conceptuality. Sensuality gives us objects to experience, conceptuality thinks them. But sensuality, if we try to consider it free of interference by concepts, only gives us objects in a certain way, as material sensations. Abstracting from material sensuality in order to arrive at its transcendental condition (a priori principle), we arrive at the notion of a pure (irreducible) form of sensuality, pure intuition. Time and space are the two pure forms of intuition; they offer the subject two channels of intuitive experience, inner and outer, self and world. But experience so constituted concerns things only as they appear, not in themselves. This exploration of a priori conditions relates only to the possibility of things'

reception, not their intrinsic possibility: a rose's redness appears different to different subjects, is not a feature of the rose in itself. Kant thus obtains conditions of the possible reality and objectivity of experience at the level of sensuality at the price of a fundamental dualism: the supposition of a stratum of cognitively inaccessible ideality.

Problems also arise with the understanding. Here cognition functions not intuitively but discursively, through concepts. If intuition is fundamentally receptive, understanding is fundamentally spontaneous. But if intuition gives us material sensation immediately, understanding operates only through mediation, in unifying judgements which subsume particular, indefinite, multifarious inputs under general concepts according to deep-structural, logical rules in the understanding, categories. Now judgement can only function if sensual inputs (which would otherwise be chaotic) are synthesised a priori into a singular order of representations, on which the understanding does its work. This pre-cognitive task is performed by the imagination. Only application of the categories, as a priori concepts of the understanding, can constitute intuitions as knowledge. But categories achieve this only in so far as an intuition actually *does* correspond to the concept. Anything can be *thought*, but it does not thereby automatically attain cognitive value. Concepts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind (*KrV*, 98). Experience, then, or knowledge, is only possible in that field of representation constituted by the imagination (transcendental synthesis of apperception), and in which judgements are formed by the action of concepts on intuitions, a process of interfacing which Kant terms the schematism. This is also where the subject, considered as consciousness, resides. There must be some stable instance which acts spontaneously upon the manifold representations in the synthesis of apperception. An 'I think', a primal or pure apperception (to distinguish it from empirical input), the transcendental unity of self-consciousness, accompanies all work of cognition (136ff.). This is what acts through time, the inner sense, in the process of making judgements. The difficulty is that Kant's critical project, which rests on accountability to reason and which proudly proclaims the defining role of subjectivity in the constitution of knowledge, at this crucial point avoids accountability. For when we ask for an explanation of the 'I think' (self-knowledge), we receive an answer analogous to that for questions in respect of things in themselves. Beyond knowledge *that* I am (as appearance), says Kant, we cannot go. My intelligence may frame a concept of self. But the intuition of self which alone would satisfy the condition of cognition (152f.) is impossible, since intelligence cannot by definition be

intuited and in any case manifests itself only as conditioned by the inner form of time, which is beyond conceptuality.⁴

It should by now be clear why Schlegel, searching for modernity's representative philosopher, did not select Kant. Kant's project, despite his radicality and systematic approach, still seemed incomplete. By 1794 Kantian transcendental philosophy had already been subjected to several critical analyses, most notably by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819). Jacobi argued in Humean style that our cognitions of things are in fact mere mental representations, which relate to things in themselves in a way not intelligible to us.⁵ This sceptical-fideistic line found its ultimate expression in Jacobi's suggestion that in a transcendental enquiry any chain of conditions ultimately ends in the unconditioned: since this cannot be made an object of cognition, *all* cognition rests at last on something beyond reason, a *salto mortale* of intuitional conviction, or faith.⁶ But it was Fichte (1759–1814), fixing on Kant's central yet highly tentative account of subjectivity, who offered a far more radical account of subjectivity and cognition. The 'Wissenschaftslehre' was intended to complete the critique of pure reason.⁷ However in one of its most accessible formulations, the *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* (1797; *Second introduction to the theory of knowledge*),⁸ Fichte holds against Kant that there is an intellectual intuition (459). He agrees that such a thing cannot be formulated conceptually and demonstrated in a proof through propositions, still less can its meaning be communicated. But it *can* be experienced, and Fichte's work in this context is full less of argument than of exhortations to the reader to follow his instructions and reproduce the experience in themselves. The experience is of primal self-consciousness (Kant's pure apperception) as sheer activity (463), the activity of those who as it were looking inward try merely to think themselves. This, says Fichte, is an immediate, spontaneous consciousness *that* the subject is active and *what* that activity is. As such, despite its pre-reflexive status, it is characterised by unquestionable necessity. It is the sole fixed reference point of all philosophy (466). On the basis of this ultra-Cartesian account of intellectual intuition Fichte moves to the conceptual level, and deduces the conditions of the possibility of self-consciousness implied by his notion of the subject as pure activity. What we call self-consciousness is in fact an empirical structure of reflection, the mere result of something prior.⁹ The empirical subject ('Ich') initially (as it were) thinks itself. Yet this subject is limited in reflection by something not itself, the object ('Nicht-Ich'). It being impossible in reflection to transcend the reciprocal determinations of the series (thinking the thinking of thinking, and so on *ad infinitum*)

except in intellectual intuition, the philosopher concludes speculatively that the reciprocal subject–object structure of empirical self-consciousness must be the result of the activity of a postulated absolute subject which contains all reality and which consists in free self-positing, a kind of unlimited emanation of sheer activity ('productive imagination', 215). This so far hardly accounts for empirical reality, the facts of our limited consciousness. But Fichte further deduces that the absolute subject must *itself* freely limit – negate – the potentially infinite centrifugal flow of activity. This generates an equal and opposite centripetal dynamic. The facts of empirical consciousness, then, emerge from something like an a priori narrative. They are the result of a primal division and alienation from the unified, absolute, and free source of being. Empirical experience, in which the subject feels alternately free and yet determined by the object, is the relatively stable result of this infinite–finite interaction. In practical terms, the thing in itself ('Not-I') has been explained away; the relative autonomy of things is accounted for by the limiting activity of the absolute subject necessary to constitute empirical reality. The subject too is accounted for, as the pure freedom of spontaneous activity (which admittedly is only experienced in intellectual intuition). Practical and theoretical domains of philosophy, systematically separated in Kant, are joined at the root, and the ethical task of the subject is to overcome the scission between empirical and absolute freedom made concrete by the resistance of the 'Not-I'. Unsurprisingly, this absolute subjectivism, with its celebration of unconditional freedom as the very essence, origin and end of the human person in the world of contingent necessity, seemed to Fichte and (for a time) Schlegel to have developed philosophy in the revolutionary age to an ultimate point. Goethe's classicist friend and collaborator Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) called it subjective Spinozism. Schlegel's Romantic friend and collaborator Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis; 1772–1801), who like Schlegel recognised the spirit of the age in a philosophical system, nominated Fichte for membership of a fanciful *Directoire* of philosophy in Germany as guardian of the constitution (NS II, 529f.).

If Fichte's philosophy seemed authentically to represent the revolutionary realisation of subjective freedom in theoretical and practical spheres, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* was that work of contemporary literature which dealt most fully with another, correlated dimension of subjective development: self-cultivation. In this, the *Bildungsroman* which established the generic paradigm, a representative young 'Bürger' (middle-class man) struggles to become himself: 'to cultivate myself, just

as I am, that from youth on was dimly my wish and my intention'.¹⁰ *Bildung*, the means to that sovereignty of self which Meister's name implies, connotes a good deal more than cultivation of the intellect. That, in a sense, is precisely what Wilhelm protests against. The 'Bürger' were politically disenfranchised in rationalistic but still-feudal Germany, their role in the state defined by management and wealth-production. One of the foils to Wilhelm, his brother-in-law Werner, thinks double-entry book-keeping is one of the most beautiful inventions of the human spirit. Wilhelm wants to transcend this impoverished vision, which circumscribes human fulfilment with the work-ethic and abstract cleverness. But in this he asks something his society cannot yet provide to a man of his provenance: cultivation in the most comprehensive sense, of his individual person – not only intellect, but the senses, emotions, imagination, physicality, sociability – of whatever potentialities nature has bestowed on him, so that he may become fully human, a whole person. There seem to Wilhelm to be only two avenues through contemporary German society to this goal: that of the leisured aristocracy, with its privileged, essentially Baroque ideal of personal cultivation, and that of the *déclassé* world of the theatre. Both exploit the potential of aesthetic experience to bypass the equation of class, work and personal limitation. Having taken the only path open to him, into the Bohemian theatre world where art and work seem one, Wilhelm is disappointed. Self-realisation on the stage proves to be a mere veneer covering the familiar exigencies of the world of profit and loss. Yet he does not renounce the potential for personal growth disclosed by the experience of art. He learns to internalise the lessons of art (as a kind of nobility of soul) and to practise a kind of free utopian renunciation of unlimited self-development, recognising his intrinsic limitation at one level, but overcoming it at another, and working selflessly in a mutually complementary collective of similarly disposed, mainly aristocratic individuals at projects intended to improve humanity's practical lot – a typical German reaction to the Revolution, rejecting its means, retaining its aims.

This is admittedly a muted kind of sovereignty of self. Yet what makes the novel for Schlegel into another embodiment of the fundamental tendencies of the revolutionary age is not the rather severe (probably Kantian) ethic Wilhelm arrives at, but the sense in which not philosophy but *aesthetic experience* exerts a transformative, emancipatory power over the self in the world of empirical contingency and limitation. After the theatre episode, Meister reads a spiritual autobiography, the story of a 'schöne Seele' (beautiful soul). Following a spiritual crisis, moral action

has become second nature for the beautiful soul, to such a degree that her ethical perfection translates into an aesthetic quality: she seems positively to incorporate ethical grace in real life (rather than, for example, on stage). From this reading Wilhelm emerges a changed man, ripe for admission to the collective of utopian renouncers. Aesthetic experience, then, *may* (as in the theatre) lead to a loss of the sense of reality. Rightly understood, however, it is also something without which Wilhelm would not have attained the position he does. This is why, having abandoned the theatre, he comes into his aesthetic inheritance (an art collection) at the close of the novel. Art may not be an end in itself; that way existential disaster lies. But used properly, art can make us into what we ought to be. Fichte's philosophy self-reflectively seemed to draw the sum of all philosophy. Goethe's novel seemed like a work of art which self-reflectively drew the sum of all art – and in some way complemented Fichte. This, evidently, is why Schlegel ranked *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* alongside Fichte and the French Revolution.

But why *does* Wilhelm never consider philosophy as a means to self-cultivation, when at the end of the philosophical century it had just attained such authoritative stature in the works of Kant and Fichte? And in what way might literature, as Schlegel implies, complement the work of philosophy? To grasp this is to understand why literature and philosophy co-operated and competed around 1800. Goethe for his part had constructed the project of *Bildung* – aesthetic humanism¹¹ – exemplified by *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* on the foundation of Schiller's mature aesthetics. There was little dispute between the classical duo. But Schiller's aesthetics are the result of a difference with Kant over the means to realise the moral destiny of the human race at this critical, post-revolutionary juncture in its historical development. Schiller was a declared Kantian, who had above all been impressed by the ethics of the critical philosophy, and in many ways his mature aesthetics (and literary writings) can be seen as an attempt to popularise Kantian morality. *Bildung* or aesthetic education nonetheless emerges from a momentous dispute with the sage of Königsberg.

In two complementary works, the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785; *Foundation of the metaphysics of morals*) and the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1787; *Critique of practical reason*),¹² Kant, the destroyer of traditional metaphysics, had nevertheless preserved the trace of metaphysics in his rigoristic ethics. No principle derived from empirical experience, he insists, can suffice for pure practical reason to ground moral action. However abstractly formulated, such principles are bound to be

heteronomous: contaminated by personal interest in some outcome (*Grundlegung*, 34, 39f.). The moral principle which determines the will must be a priori, totally unconditioned and autonomous, purely formal, grounded compellingly in the structure of reason itself. This is the categorical imperative (45). In reality, the will must of course act to some end and treat others correspondingly. But since humanity – seen as a rational creature – is an end *in itself* (59ff.), the transcendental principle of practical reason is easily formulated: act in such a way that all persons are treated as ends in themselves. Now from speculative reason's standpoint our autonomy as the principle of ethical causality is a mere idea. It is well founded in reason, but no intuition from the realm of determinate phenomena can be found to fill the concept. Yet in the realm of practical reason this essential freedom *can* in a sense be known, in so far as our moral action in itself *demonstrates* the presence of the supersensual in the sensual world: noumenal freedom within the domain of phenomenal law. This is obviously not empirical knowledge. But it is knowledge – of a higher realm of nature, altogether cleansed of the sensual: *intelligible* nature. Moral action, then, is the intuition of the idea of practical reason, the only certain knowledge available of the *metaphysical* world, and indeed the only basis for postulates regarding the existence of God, freedom and personal immortality. Fichte of course took the chance to identify this consciousness with intellectual intuition (*Zweite Einleitung*, 472), and this is at the root of his claim to have unified the practical and theoretical philosophies.

The inspiring effect on Schiller and his generation of this *tour de force* of post-revolutionary self-determination, the crowning glory of Kant's project to save metaphysics in modernity and the basis of his utopian political philosophy for the ethical state, is well documented. Even so, the further problem arises as to whether and how the abstract and rigoristic categorical imperative might be translated into everyday practice. Kant had unconvincingly insisted that anyone might grasp his ethics, since they are grounded in common-or-garden rationality (*Grundlegung*, 39n). With this Schiller differed. His pioneering essay, *Über Anmut und Würde* (1793; *On grace and dignity*)¹³ criticises the categorical imperative as harsh and dualistic, from the characteristic standpoint of Schiller's anthropological holism. He agrees with Kant's ethical rigorism to the extent that the dictation of the moral law must be free of sensuous contamination, that duty must ignore (for example) any striving for (merely individual) happiness. Nevertheless human nature – despite the power of Kant's transcendental analysis – is a holistic unity, irreducibly composed of intellect and sense.

The categorical imperative, sublime document of ethical destiny as it is, seems in reality less to realise human freedom than to repeat the mistakes of the Revolution, ruthlessly to expose human nature's weakness in order to enslave it, and in particular our corporeality, to pure practical reason (463ff.). Thus it perpetuates the fragmentation of the modern subject.

Kant had in fact already offered an alternative mediation between the non-moral and the moral dispositions. *Aesthetic ideas*, he claimed, might do the job by providing the less sophisticated, sensually determined mind with an *analogy* of ethical cognition. For in aesthetic experience, as Kant describes it in the first part of the *Kritik der Urteilkraft* (1790; *Critique of judgement*),¹⁴ we experience objects in a particular and unique way: not as objects of phenomenal knowledge but as sheer appearances, which precisely in this bear a special relation to the ethical. Aesthetic experience is play: the harmonious play of imagination and conceptuality in the act of reflective judgement (100), which spontaneously seeks the concept for the complex and powerful intuition of an aesthetic work, and derives pleasure from its satisfying purposiveness. Of course no concept is ever found. Purposiveness in aesthetic experience is a purely formal property, which is never expressed in some purpose outside itself, so that the object acquires the semblance of autonomy. Without a concept aesthetic experience is excluded from cognition strictly so defined (221). But judgements on art do claim a kind of objectivity and cognitive value. Aesthetic pleasure is admittedly subjective. However, it inheres in the material form of the work, so that the particular experience is shared by all subjects. To that extent aesthetic judgements rightfully claim general assent according to norms judged by the aesthetic sense or faculty of taste (228). Beauty has a sort of cognitive value too, in that aesthetic experience inspires us (249ff.): the powerful intuitions of art factually transcend understanding and so stretch the mind beyond the domain of experience. Hence Kant terms them *aesthetic ideas*. They are analogous to the empirically impossible representation of ideas proper, concepts of reason which may be well founded in reason but transcend any possible empirical intuition. Aesthetic ideas, then, generated by the genius, have the *potential to train us in moral action*. For the appearance of freedom inevitably appeals to something in the subject which is more than nature. It is not strictly freedom, but it does relate to the supersensual ground of freedom. Furthermore, beauty and ethical experience evince strong emotional and structural parallels. Beauty is immediate, disinterested, universally human, and characteristically harmonises antagonistic opposites (imaginative freedom and conceptual necessity). Ethical experience

too is immediate, disinterested (albeit in reason's interest), universally human, and harmonises antagonistic opposites (freedom of the will and rational necessity). In short, beauty can be accounted a *symbol* of the morally good (297). As such, it potentially builds an existential bridge between non-moral and moral dispositions to act: habituates us to bending imagination to reason's purpose (even when acting freely), teaches us to find pleasure in sensuality without falling prey to sensual interest, and facilitates the move from being sensually determined to obeying reason's interest without a behavioural leap.

In *Über Anmut und Würde* Schiller remains anything but opposed to the interest of reason, but he radicalises Kant's tentative aesthetic mediation. If reason's ethical interest is to be served reason must not dominate; sensuality and intellect must work together. For this to happen, however, the subject's moral action in the phenomenal sphere must not merely be aesthetically mediated, but must also *express* itself aesthetically. One who obeys the *Diktat* of the categorical imperative is in theory acting freely, and Kant certainly thought of this as the liberating triumph of supersensuality. In fact, he visibly labours. He shows the compulsion in his body language as the signature of the paradoxical violation of something fundamental to his constitution as a human person. The interest of reason is, says Schiller, better served if nature, in reason's realm, is allowed by reason to *remain* nature – if ethical freedom expresses itself not against, but *through* body language, as *second* nature: beautifully. This *visible* harmony of freedom and sensuality, duty and inclination, is 'Anmut', grace. Its incarnation is of course the beautiful soul (*Anmut und Würde*, 468) whose autobiography Wilhelm Meister read. Its purpose is to enlist the aid of sensuality in reason's project: to further humanity's destiny through the harmonious union of the forces in human nature rather than division or subordination. Schiller's aestheticising approach to the ethical orthodoxy of transcendental philosophy thus defines one chief function of literature in this epoch: under the guise of co-operation to preach the rights of corporeality and person against idealism's abstract concept of subject. In this, Schiller's aesthetic meta-Kantianism is also one of the earliest expressions of the critique of the dialectic of Enlightenment, whereby the systematic application of reason characteristic of Kant in particular and modern culture in general is argued to produce rationality and irrationality, freedom and compulsion, in equal measure.¹⁵

Schiller's elegy 'Der Tanz' (1796; 'The dance') is a good example of what he means in *Anmut und Würde*. These elegant neo-classical distichs celebrate how, in the dance, music's gentle discipline magically liberates

the body from natural constraint – as the clumsy skiff suddenly glides in the stream. But this is not all. In the dance a further, higher principle of social ordering – second nature – seems harmoniously to regulate natural appetite. Where the spontaneous, apparently wilful moves of individual couples into the whirling mass threaten chaos and destruction, in fact the power of musical harmony guarantees that new order and form ensue. The poem is thus revealed as an allegory of the relevance of aesthetic grace to the social problem. Even the natural universe is so governed. The inspiring rhythm of living being and the infinitely complex, yet orderly paths of heavenly bodies through the cosmos are like the dance: examples of a universal principle of self-regulating Nemesis, which reconciles freedom and necessity, chaos and order, body and mind, individual and totality, change and continuity, in the measured aesthetic vision, which is henceforth to be respected in life as much as in art. Schiller systematically propounded this programme in a lengthy series of poems, from ‘Die Künstler’ (1789; ‘The artists’) on.

Schiller’s most important single work, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795; *On the aesthetic education of humanity*),¹⁶ makes the ambition of this aesthetic programme fully explicit. Here he frankly thematises antagonism in the body politic following the French Revolution. Both the French Revolution and German reforms are crude attempts to impose reason on the ‘natural’ state. By antagonising rather than working with what is natural in the state they paradoxically repress ethical freedom. Thus the political problem is but a wider expression of modernity’s basic ill: the personal fragmentation diagnosed in *Über Anmut und Würde*. The domination of either rationality or sensuality must be undone. But not by philosophy. With the establishment of the moral law, philosophy’s task is exhausted (*Ästhetische Erziehung*, 590f.). Instead, the experience of beauty is the necessary condition of humanity (600), the *only* way to make people under the one-sided determination of either sensuality or rationality truly humane (641). This is so, Schiller explains in an exhilarating if hyperbolic reformulation of Kantian aesthetic autonomy, because, uniquely, the apparently self-determining beautiful object actually *does* instantiate freedom in (empirical) appearance, not merely in the way the subject might experience it. To sensualists, the numinous reality of self-determination is revealed in an aptly sensual medium, and creates in them the disposition to moral sovereignty. To ethical rigorists, the cause of sensuality is pleaded with grace. *Only* thus, in the transitional zone where philosophy’s writ does not run, is the mediation between sensuality and ethical form possible. Thus art now claims responsibility for

realising the ethical and political project of practical philosophy. From this flows a programme of universal aestheticisation of human experience. Schiller demands in answer to Kant and the Revolution and in direct affront to the Platonic tradition¹⁷ nothing less than the aesthetic state.

This, then, is the full reason why Meister does not consult a philosophy manual on his journey to self-cultivation, and why *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* merit their place in *Athenaeums-Fragment* no. 216. When Meister, with his paradigmatic desire for self-development, passes through art to moral sovereignty, he does not merely encounter the beautiful soul. He also – albeit not without criticism – encounters Schiller’s meta-Kantian theory of art’s transformative power and programme for restoring the human wholeness *beyond philosophy*. Philosophy may have identified the tendency of the modern age, but, as Schiller said in *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (1795–6; *On naive and reflective poetry*), modernity’s gain is also loss, and that loss can only be recuperated through aesthetic discourse. Art thus also becomes the organ of cultural memory and prophet of the utopian future in bad times (*Ästhetische Erziehung*, 594). Classical antiquity offers the lost ideal of holistic self-fulfilment. Goethe and Schiller become committed classicists, typically in works such as Schiller’s ‘Die Götter Griechenlands’ (1788; ‘The gods of Greece’) and Goethe’s ‘Römische Elegien’ (1790; ‘Roman elegies’), both of which seek to synthesise the reflexivity which is the strength and weakness of modern culture with the naivety and spontaneity of the classical idyll. Thus at the dawn of modernity, as Schlegel saw, literature and philosophy share a path but also begin to diverge. Schiller and Goethe inaugurate the tradition of aesthetic modernism,¹⁸ in which the emergence of the notions of absolute subjective freedom in philosophy and reason’s absolute authority in culture call forth an aesthetic discourse criticising rationalistic excess. The new belief in the cognitive and performative power of art and literature led to an explosion of creativity in aesthetic theory and experimental literature.

The authoritative tone of *Athenaeums-Fragment* no. 216 betrays that Friedrich Schlegel and his fellow early German Romantics saw their role as more than acknowledging the achievements of idealism and classicism. Like classical humanism, Romanticism emerges in large part from a literary reception of philosophy as the dominant discourse of the Enlightenment, but here the respective importance of Kant and Fichte shifts. Both Goethe and Schiller had studied Kant intensively.¹⁹ Goethe had in 1794 appointed Fichte to the University of Jena. But most of his copies

of Fichte's works remained obstinately uncut.²⁰ As allusions to Fichtean concepts in the *Ästhetische Erziehung* suggest,²¹ Schiller had read more. In the end, however, the classical duo dismissed the 'Wissenschaftslehre' as a hypertrophic version of the common-sense distinction between subject and object. But for the early Romantics Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) the thinker of absolute subjective sovereignty was the unquestioned philosophical hero. They used Fichte, who wrote no aesthetics, to found their own programme, called first 'Fichtisiren' (Fichticising) (*NS* II, 524, no. 11) and later 'Romantisiren' (Romanticising) (*NS* II, 545, no. 105). Here the disjunctive Kantian relation of aesthetic experience to philosophical cognition, already blurred by Schiller's promotion of aesthetic experience as the voice of holistic human truth, was much more radically redefined.

The fundamental document of this move are Hardenberg's *Fichte-Studien*, philosophical studies of Fichte over the period 1795–6 (*NS* II, 104–296). These recognise the problem of fragmentation, but focus less on the aspect of holistic human truth than on expansion of self-consciousness from the perspective of the Fichtean absolute. Where Fichte had constantly claimed that what he had to say and the way of saying it were ontologically incommensurable, Hardenberg's *Fichte-Studien* begin and end with problems of writing and representation. As with Fichte, the chief problem of philosophy is the meta-critique of Kant: the thinking of identity in the structure of reflection. However, Hardenberg focuses not only on the abstract form of the problem, but also on a concrete aspect, namely, that reflection on identity must occur in a medium: a representation, a language of some kind. Things (such as 'I' and 'Not-I'), must be named in order to form part of the process of reflection. But the name of the thing is derivative and as such cannot fix its essential being. Where there is only voice (things coming into being) there can be no echo (*NS* II, 202). This sceptical and relativistic view of representation does not however make Hardenberg into a Shandyesque linguistic critic of absolute subjectivism. He accepts the Fichtean framework, in that the definition of the subject must flow from its reciprocal opposition to the object, and that logically a prior totality, an all-encompassing 'sphere' of being, must be thought in which this reciprocal definition takes place. That totality is however now recognised to be beyond naming and to transcend the representational structure of reflection altogether. We are left with the recognition that the philosophical absolute, whilst logically necessary, is paradoxically an absence, at best an intuition of lost but yearned-for totality from the standpoint of alienated modern reflection.

Our task, then, if we are to think identity, has become aesthetic: to *construct* totality in language on the basis of that privileged primal intuition. The constructed absolute is technically a fiction. But it is a necessary one, for it alone transcends reflection, makes the absent absolute in some sense present and intelligible in the prosaic everyday. As a representation it is however also constitutionally provisional and relative, subject to unending revision. It realises the ideal, but must also be acknowledged as only an experimental attempt. The transcendental self thus loses its fixed Cartesian-Fichtean foundation. Fixed in a deeply ironic relation to being and reality, it becomes a fundamentally unstable construct, oscillating between something and nothing. This genesis of Romanticism in a fusion of absolute idealism and linguistic scepticism accounts for its characteristically paradoxical stance of utopianism (unending perfectibility) and irony.

Romantic writing is the practical consequence of this: philosophico-aesthetic performances which do not so much represent the absolute as enact the palindromic figure of thought given by the process of idealistic construction and ironic retraction. At the end of the *Fichte-Studien* this is formulated gnomically as the need to represent the sensual spiritually and the spiritual sensually (NS II, 283, no. 633). The development from 'Fichtisiren' to 'Romantisiren' in Hardenberg's classic formulation of 1797 clarifies the technique. Romanticisation, commonly understood since Heine as escapist manipulation of the banal facts of alienated everyday experience (as moonshine transfigures ashen nightscape), in fact performs a bi-polar destabilisation of textual referentiality. The contents of everyday consciousness – ordinary, common, well-known, finite things – are in Hardenberg's metaphor 'potentialised': endowed with the semblance of high significance, mystery, strangeness, infinity, in short, a relation to the absolute. But there is also a corresponding, equal and opposite move. Our notions of the ideal, the higher, the unknown, the mystical, the infinite, are 'logarithmicised': humoristically reduced in semantic stature by being identified with their banal opposite. All this is intended as a provocation (NS II, 282) of the late eighteenth-century philistine subject's latent freedom: the liberation of pure transcendentality from the bounds of phenomenal consciousness on the one hand, combined with a healthy sense of self-irony on the other.

There are far-reaching consequences of this semi-modernist, semi-mystical constructivism. Hardenberg and the Romantics abandon the fundamental orientation of both Kant's and Fichte's (indeed all German School) philosophy towards system. Romantic thought has and can

only have the character of a fragment: 'the systemless, systematised' (NS II, 289, no. 648). Hardenberg's theory of knowledge is also less rationalisation than intuitive *poiesis*. We know things only by making them in words. The essential activity of intellect, as Hardenberg states elsewhere, consists in transforming otherness into ownness, turning the world into home (NS III, 434, no. 857). Human nature (recalling Plato)²² is in this sense essentially poetic: humanity is metaphor. Metaphorical making competes boldly with propositionality as a theory of cognition,²³ and Kant's cautious acknowledgement of subjective sources of cognition is dramatically radicalised: the aprioristic and divinatory fantasy experiments of the poet are a better way of achieving insight into nature than severe natural-scientific methodologies of observation and experiment.

All this makes up what Hardenberg calls 'Poesie', and with it comes a corresponding elevation in status vis-à-vis philosophy. He characteristically attacks in metaphor philosophy's 'jagged peaks of pure reason' (NS IV, 321) and especially Fichte's 'awesome spiral of abstractions' (NS IV, 230). Rather, he says: 'Poetry is the authentically absolute reality – this is the core of my philosophy. The more poetic, the more true' (NS II, 647, no. 473). Echoing Schiller, he declares that philosophy's work is done when its legislation has prepared the world for the influence of ideas, but poetry is the key to philosophy, its task communicatively to realise those ideas. Where Schiller had seen the poet as the only true human being and the age as sick, Hardenberg sees the transcendental poet as the transcendental doctor of the human race. Later, the terms 'Poesie' and 'Philosophie' become a kind of correlated shorthand. 'Philosophie' comes to mean less the continuing pursuit of truth through formalised procedures which endow knowledge claims with authority than the ultimate results already achieved by Kant and Fichte. Whenever Romantic writers use the term 'Poesie', it connotes this implicit critique of philosophy. In the end, poetry becomes for the Romantics a mythical entity. Their texts are not only to realise philosophy's project, but also to incarnate absolute poetry. In this sense poetry becomes a cult, and the cult of poetry comes to embody Germany's post-revolutionary answer to the French religion of reason. The abstract quality of some of these procedures should not mask their political status as a response to the Revolution. 'Poesie', said Friedrich Schlegel, is a republican discourse.

The first literary fruit of this new shift in the terms of dialogue between poetry and philosophy is the Romantic Fragment. Its inventor, Friedrich Schlegel, shared much with Hardenberg. He saw intellectual intuition, with its paradoxical transcendence of reflection, as the categorical

imperative (epistemological ideal) of theory (*Athenaeums-Fragment* no. 76; *KFSA* II, 176). He rejected both systematic thought and its opposite (no. 53; *KFSA* II, 173), and argued for the complementarity of philosophy and poetry.²⁴ Philosophical demonstrations, he said, were conducted in ‘militarised’ technical language, which merely served to legitimate claims to intellectual territory once seized. Philosophical definitions could at best give hints, at worst say nothing or obscure everything. What mattered was simply to know something and say it. In practice, it was far harder to assert than prove something (no. 82; *KFSA* II, 177). But even an assertion was not final, merely a stepping stone of argument. All this was not philosophy but ‘Symphilosophie’ or ‘Sympoesie’: a shared intellectual process of creation, which rejects traditional, monologous thought and invites unending, dialogical exploration.

The Romantic Fragment is this characteristically assertoric yet open-ended form, half discursive thought, half metaphorical divination. Perhaps Schlegel’s most brilliant Fragment is one of the smallest, *Athenaeums-Fragment* no. 206. This looks like a sparse theoretical definition of the genre: ‘A Fragment must as a miniature work of art be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and perfect in itself, like a hedgehog.’ The Fragment, says Schlegel, must model totality: relate to the absolute as autonomous microcosm does to macrocosm. Of course his ending, the simile of the (rolled up) hedgehog, depotentialises the pretentious assertion with an abrupt rhetorical descent from the sublime to the ridiculous: a willed humoristic disproportion between transcendental ambition and textual achievement targeted at Schlegel himself and Romanticism in general. Schlegel called this sort of thing transcendental buffoonery. But the point is that this Fragment, whilst it defines the genre, does not do so as a definition in the abstract ‘military’ language of (philosophical) aesthetics. It *embodies* the definition of the genre by *enacting* what it says, and so *being* a Fragment: momentarily perfect, finally incomplete. It is not theory but intuition, or rather both theory and intuition, definition and thing. Thus it instantiates Schlegel’s ideal of Romantic epistemology: intellectual intuition as ‘categorical imperative of theory’.

Of course for the Romantics all texts, irrespective of genre and whether considered by their author to be ‘finished’ works or not, are intrinsically fragmentary. Received notions of author, work and text are revised so as to give the aesthetic turn of Goethe and Schiller still another, unmistakably hermeneutic twist. Homer’s classic texts, as Schlegel discovered through the Göttingen scholar F. A. Wolf, were in fact not finished when written by their named author, but successively modified by later, anonymous critics

reflecting on and perfecting the 'originals'. Nor was Goethe's *Meister*, their great modern counterpart, complete. Schlegel's *Über Goethes Meister* (1798; *On Goethe's Meister*) began the process of revising it. Reflective criticism is thus more than just evaluation or interpretation. A critic recreates the original text, once digested, at a higher level, and criticism attains the same dignity as poetry or philosophy proper. The Romantics hardly abandoned Kantian individualistic genius in favour of collective creativity, but for them the notion of authorship is fundamentally relativised and pluralised. Hardenberg offered its paradigmatic formulation: 'The true reader must be the author, expanded' (*NS* II, 470, no. 125).

These early insights helped to refound a scholarly discipline. The hermeneutics of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1776–1834), conceived around 1805–6 and first systematised in 1819, but only published as *Hermeneutik und Kritik* (*Hermeneutics and criticism*) in 1838,²⁵ develop the germinal ideas of his friends. By profession a Berlin reformed theologian, Schleiermacher had made his name with *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (1799; *On religion. Addresses to its cultivated despisers*), which sought to make religion appeal to the secular mentality of the educated classes by grounding religious experience (irrespective of particular doctrine) in the familiar, philosophically respectable Romantic concept of totalising intuition. Like Schlegel and Hardenberg Schleiermacher had come to be convinced that thought is not independent of the language in which it is cast. Judgements, then, are not purely logical, but also expressive and interpretative acts embedded in the pre-existent structure of communication. The Kantian abstract schematism of concept and intuition must therefore be complemented by a linguistic schematism which mediates the individual utterance of the author with the totality of the language he and his reader use, and dialectics (Schleiermacher's logic) must be complemented by hermeneutics. In this he not only anticipates the Saussurian categories of (general) 'langue' and (individual) 'parole', but is also the author of the term 'speech act' later popularised by J. L. Austin (*Hermeneutik und Kritik*, 89; cf. 76ff.). A text, then, is an intrinsically individual and historical expression of the universal, to grasp it the purpose of hermeneutics. The deceptively simple formulation of this aim – adequate comprehension of another's text (71) – in fact requires a twofold analysis of text and context. Grammatical analysis covers the externality of the language used. From this standpoint the author is merely the site of a particular utterance, the meaning of which can only be grasped as conditioned by the totality of existing semantic possibilities in the language as a whole. Psychological analysis on the

other hand recognises the innovative power of individual creativity (style, 168), and only the interpreter's subjective divination of the intended new sense (169f.) can launch the process of understanding proper. The art of hermeneutics demands the synthesis of both approaches. Schlegel, provocative as ever, had insisted that the critic must understand the author better than the author himself. Schleiermacher's formulation of his (unattainable) hermeneutic ideal – 'to understand a text first just as well and then better than its author' (94) – consciously echoes this.

But of course the main expression of the Romantics' hermeneutic approach was their literary writing, in particular the ultimate expression of 'Poesie': the Romantic novel. Almost all Romantics – Hardenberg, Friedrich Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, Clemens Brentano, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Joseph von Eichendorff – wrote at least one. The Romantic novel attempts to synthesise all known genres in a constantly evolving would-be absolute mode of discourse. But it was also a mode of hermeneutic criticism, a sympoetical dialogue with a constantly evolving 'classic' text. Palimpsest-like, most Romantic novels respond to the epoch-making 'tendency' of *Wilhelm Meister*. But they also respond to philosophy. Schlegel (thinking of Socrates in Plato's *Apology*)²⁶ saw philosophy as the true home of irony (*Kritisches Fragment*, no. 42), but this only supported his assertion that (Romantic) novels were the Socratic dialogues of his day (no. 26). Schlegel set no limits to their form or theme. In practice, almost all preach the myth of poetry as meta-philosophy and, transcending both Goethe and Fichte, treat some aspect of the crisis of subjectivity in which a specific limitation of philosophical talk is overcome by aesthetic means. Often allusions to Plato (the representative idealist philosopher of classical antiquity) introduce these arguments. Novels by Hardenberg, Friedrich Hölderlin, Friedrich Schlegel and Clemens Brentano exemplify this.

Hardenberg's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1800–2) was an 'apotheosis of poetry'²⁷ intended to overcome the ambiguous view of art in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. Unlike Wilhelm, Heinrich is not half but a whole poet, and the story shows how mythic poetry triumphs over prosaic earthly existence. In particular, it transforms the temporal horizon of his consciousness, and in this Hardenberg also takes up a famous Platonic problem. In the *Parmenides*,²⁸ Plato had analysed a paradox of temporality. In time's linear flow motion and rest cannot be conceived together. Where one is, the other cannot be. Some higher, transitional zone, a quintessentially Platonic privileged vantage point inside but outside of time, must exist to mediate their relation. Plato calls it the 'moment', but also considered it

beyond conceptuality. The apotheosis of Heinrich's life story is just such a 'moment'.

This works through an original narrative technique. Early on, prompted by an encounter with a wandering poet, Heinrich has an extraordinary dream which represents the birth of poetic consciousness in him. In a (Platonic) cave he bathes in the wellsprings of creation, the *menstruum universale* of the cosmic imagination. Here, mere thinking is creation of self and other. This phase of the dream, then, is a literary figuration of intellectual intuition.²⁹ From this highest level of ideality he passes to external nature, which strangely resembles the earlier domain. In a third realm, ideal and real are synthesised, and he is captivated by a woman's face in the corolla of a large blue flower. All this signifies what the title of part one of the novel suggests: expectation. The dip in the *menstruum universale* connotes initiation into the poetic nature of absolute reality and his awakening self-understanding as part of *natura naturans*. The move into everyday reality suggests subsequent entrapment in the domain of the 'Not-I'. The last phase suggests that love (the woman's face) unites the two realms. When however in part two expectation becomes fulfilment and the dream events unfold in empirical fact, dream and reality, past and future, merge. The reader's perspective is dislocated into a zone where all three temporal dimensions of Heinrich's life dissolve in the paradoxical continuum of a boundless present, inside yet outside of time's flow, the unity of Heinrich's finite consciousness with the infinite productivity of his origin. This skilfully constructed totalising perspective of immanent transcendence,³⁰ then, is the Platonic 'moment', Romanticised. It is the first of those renowned epiphanic moments which aim to recover the authentic self in modernist literature.³¹

Friedrich Hölderlin (1776–1843), friend of Schelling and Hegel, and with Hardenberg the most powerful poet-philosopher of the first Romantic generation, had followed a strikingly similar path to his own version of the myth of poetry. He argued in the untitled landmark essay known as *Seyn, Urtheil, Modalität* (1794; *Being, judgement, modality*)³² that subject and object were ontologically one in intellectual intuition, but that this oneness should not be logically confused with identity. Self-consciousness is only possible through a reflective division of the primal oneness of being, in which 'I' and 'Not-I' are separated. Identity is thus incommensurable with the unity of absolute being and itself entails fragmentation. Absolute identity is pre- or meta-reflexive, in this sense past. As with the Romantics, we can only go forward to it, by other means. The cognitively accentuated experience of beauty, with its characteristic harmonisation

of antagonistic opposites (recall the pioneering Kantian definition) becomes for Hölderlin the means to attain unity at a higher level.

His novel *Hyperion oder der Eremit in Griechenland* (1797–9; *Hyperion, or the hermit in Greece*),³³ the story of an idealist striver in contemporary Greece under Russo-Turkish colonisation, exemplifies this figure of thought in an historical scheme. Hyperion suffers from the fragmentation and limitation characteristic of modernity, be it the division in his personality, of Greece from its past and destiny, the individual from the state, or humanity from nature, and the novel tells of his progress towards resolution of these conflicts. His guide in this has the same name as the woman who, in Plato's *Symposium*, teaches Socrates the true meaning and nature of love: Diotima.³⁴ Love, Eros, is for Socrates' wisest woman not a god but a daemon, a mediating figure between the mortal and immortal realms, whose nature consists not in possession of the good, the true and the beautiful, but in striving for them – proceeding via the vision of beautiful form, deeds and knowledge to the vision of absolute beauty itself. Only this makes life worth living, makes the mortal capable of creating the good, the true and the beautiful, of being loved by the gods, and so of reaching immortality.³⁵ As he looks back on a life of failed striving, it is Hölderlin's Diotima who offers Hyperion hope. But this Diotima prefers silence to talk. When she speaks, it is in song, indeed her entire being seems to consist in this sense in poetry (*Hyperion*, 660), so that Hyperion's encounter with Diotima is less the Socratic process of progressive philosophical enlightenment through dialogue with a wise woman than the overcoming of division and ascent to the vision of divine beauty through love of beauty personified, a muse. For Hyperion, inspired as he is by the encounter with Diotima, philosophy – as Minerva springs from the mind of Jupiter (685) – is the secondary (Athenian) creation of a totalising poetic vision. It will finally become poetry again (685). The work of understanding is mere division, and even reason must follow the vision of beauty, the differentiated oneness ('das Eine in sich selber unterschiedne') of Heraclitus (685ff.) which alone gives meaning to reason's 'demands' (687). Now seeing this appears to come too late. Diotima and Hyperion have separated: he is carried off in a doomed war of liberation, she by illness. However, Hölderlin's novel is not one of action but of sentimental remembrance. Its point is anamnesis, the re-call and re-presentation of the past, so that the past's meaning *thereby* becomes present, and Hyperion's ascent to higher vision is enacted in the text. Stranded in philistine Germany, Hyperion flees to an oasis of natural beauty and experiences a privileged anamnesis of Diotima in

response to his yearning. The recuperated presentness of the vision of beauty in the German cultural desert for a moment unites writer and written, releases his poetic voice, makes the novel possible, and sends him on his poetic mission (759f.).

Hyperion contains a further allusion to the *Symposium* when the hero refers to the (in another sense holistic) androgynous oneness which he and Diotima enjoy, in that their love overcomes sexual difference and limitation and makes each fully human. Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde* (1799) radicalises this argument (*KFS4* II, 1–82). Here Julius tells a conventional Meisteresque story of his search for self-fulfilment, which passes through stations of emotional, intellectual and artistic development, each embodied by a woman (or a man), until he finds Lucinde. Thus *Lucinde* preaches a full-blown aesthetic-androgynous utopia. Lucinde is a beautiful, Diotima-like muse for whom life and love are identical and who typically embodies the eighteenth-century gender stereotype of woman as undivided ideal of wholeness and closeness to nature (62). But both Julius and Lucinde are artists who *make* their relationship in the poetic sense (65). She too has received the artistic vocation (traditionally the male privilege), and is Julius' intellectual equal. Thus they pursue the aesthetic-erotic ideal of androgyny through sympoetic exchange.³⁶ They internalise each other's gender role in aesthetic mimicry. Together they explore the gamut of human experience from richest sensuality to strictest intellectuality. In short: *living* beautiful androgyny is the highest truth. Indeed Julius' and Lucinde's union enacts both life *as* art and, as its brilliantly innovative form demonstrates, the 'moment' of totality (16): Julius' life is cast as a brief narrative; but it is embedded in the centre of an arabesque of non-narrative text-types, so that the beginning and end of his story are dissolved in the timeless embrace of Lucinde's presence.

In a new twist, however, *Godwi, oder das steinerne Bild der Mutter. Ein verwilderter Roman von MARIA* (1800–2; *Godwi, or the stone image of the mother. A novel gone wild, by MARIA*)³⁷ by Clemens Brentano (1778–1842) dramatises the failure of the Romantic pursuit of the self. At one level a pendant to *Lucinde*, it explores the mystery of Godwi's sexuality as he seeks to realise the androgynous utopia with Molly and Violetta. *Godwi* is, however, most significant at the formal level, where digression and Romantic irony indeed run wild. While part one is cast in traditional epistolary form, part two enacts a loss of authorial control. Maria increasingly thematises his ironic despair of finishing the novel (225), longs for it to be over, kneels before Godwi and begs forgiveness for having written it, promises never to repeat the misdeed, and at last persuades his main fictive character to

serve as co-author – the joke being, of course, that all this merely makes the text longer. Ultimately, Godwi (415) tells of Maria's death, carried off by a fatal inflammation of the tongue. But even here *Godwi* does not manage to end. In perhaps the longest unclosed ending ever written, biographical monuments to Maria, broadly hinting at his identity with 'Clemens Brentano' (450) (whose middle name was Maria) proliferate. Here the death of the author is established long before Foucault declared it. The novel moves from the convention whereby a 'real' author narrates a fictive life to a parodistic position from which the fictive character not only criticises the truth value of fiction, but also narrates the death of the 'real' author, so that fiction, once launched, consumes all. In this excess of non-closure the Romantic self is less recovered than trapped. *Godwi* contains a typically Romantic attack on Fichte's regressive version of self-consciousness in intellectual intuition (234f.) as placing shadow in the stead of substance. But his aestheticist alternative culminates in a regress of its own.

Jean Paul (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, 1763–1825) typifies how far the commitment to aestheticist truth-finding was prevalent among writers around 1800. He shared the Romantics' metaphysical hunger and ironic humour and the classicists' desire for anthropological wholeness. Yet he allied himself with neither, dismissing the Romantics in particular as poetic nihilists arrogantly proposing and disposing of the world from the bastion of their egotism.³⁸ His *Bildungsroman Titan* (1800) echoes Brentano's Fichte critique. The Fichtean Schoppe, who cannot distinguish between his self and the world it generates, dies of shock when encountering his double.³⁹ Philosophically gifted and influenced by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's philosophical leap into faith, Jean Paul could never have agreed with Kant either. His major debate with the critical philosophy is crystallised in *Das Kampaner Thal oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (1797; *The Vale of Campano, or on the immortality of the soul*).⁴⁰ Kant's philosophy, he says (alluding to the categorical imperative), daily proves our immortality. But this kind of proof is not enough. Only emotion can change a person; even the philosopher in his abstract world needs emotion. But only poetry can function as philosophy's 'electrical condensor', and amplify the abstractions of philosophy into (emotive) bolts of healing electricity (563f.). The demonstration of this is *Das Kampaner Thal* itself, the poetic rendition of a sentimental journey through a paradisaical valley, where newly-wed friends debate as they stroll. The main opponent of 'Jean Paul' is the chaplain, a declared Kantian. He keeps his distance from 'Jean Paul' because writers engage with life. The

philosopher by contrast treats all vital ('kräftig') truths and experiences as the ant does seeds in his nest: he bites out their living germ so that they will not grow, and uses them as building material. The main conflict comes over immortality. The Kantian is teased. Kant's ethics had insisted that the value of virtue lay in the struggle for the good in itself, not in the happiness which the prospect of immortality might offer as a reward. In that case, the writer's companion Karlson argues, philosophers ought positively to attack the prospect of immortality. Indeed, if belief in immortality might make us immoral in this world, what will experience of it in the next do to us? Worse: if immortality cannot be demonstrated, why make its indemonstrability a reason for believing in it? The purpose of this dubious wit is to showcase poetry's alternative. Metaphysical speculation, they accept, is dead. Yet, like crystals embedded in the glacier, there is something in humanity – virtue, truth, beauty – which is of, but more than nature (611f.). It is these forces, capable of creating a higher world in us with no original in nature, which suggest an inner, higher reality. To this humans belong and for it, as strangers here, they yearn. Only the feeling for this discloses our immortality. Thus neither philosophical arguments nor ethical action but an image of immortality, plucked from but transcending nature, dominates at journey's end: the night ascent in two Montgolfier hot-air balloons in which the characters stand suspended in the ether between heaven and earth – of the earth, yet with a view of paradise (624ff.). Literature's task for Jean Paul is the metaphorical revelation of the infinite in the finite.

Philosophers themselves were not immune to the arguments poets invented to raise the cognitive and performative dignity of aesthetic experience. The unidentified author of *Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus*⁴¹ (1795; *The oldest systematic programme of German idealism*), an early idealist manifesto, insisted that the highest act of reason was an aesthetic act and a myth. One of its possible authors, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854), was not only the schoolmate of the other candidates for authorship, Hölderlin and Hegel, but also a close associate of the early Romantic circle in Jena. A philosophical *Wunderkind* who at twenty-two held a chair in philosophy at Jena, Schelling had heard Fichte's lectures, and is certainly in the mainstream of the idealist tradition, but he gives his solution of the identity problem a significantly different, aesthetic emphasis in the tradition of the *Ältestes Systemprogramm*. In one of his early writings, *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen* (1795; *On the I as principle of philosophy or the unconditional in human knowledge*),⁴² he affirms the Romantic-Hölderlinian

critique of Fichte's intellectual intuition. When we seek to think the unconditional or absolute as the highest point of knowledge, we must accept that the absolute strictly transcends the relational subject–object structure of thought. But if we can refer to the absolute at all, there must exist a pre-reflexive intuition of it (57f.), and this intuition, since it cannot belong to the conditioned domain of sensuality (69ff.), must be intellectual ('intellektuale', in Schelling's characteristic spelling). What this means for philosophy becomes clear in the *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* (1800; *System of transcendental idealism*).⁴³ Like Fichte, Schelling deduces a kind of a priori narrative of the becoming of subject and object, intellect and nature. If the absolute is to know itself as identity, then it must negate its own, unlimited productivity. Thus is constituted a world torn by that which binds it together, the contradictory tension of infinite and finite, ideal and real energies of which every part of its fabric is made. Relative stability can be conferred on this structure only by thinking it as endlessly *becoming* (450f.), in that the infinite productivity constantly creates and then negates its finite, ideal-real product in a series of ever higher, more ideal levels of evolution, all of which are orientated finally to overcoming the primal division at a level of ultimate indifference. This, in contrast to Fichte's sullenly resistant 'Nicht-Ich', is the domain of positively living, organic nature, of which – again in contrast to Fichte – the thinking subject is for Schelling a part, and from which, *as* part of this process, it emerges. Philosophy, then, divides for Schelling in this phase of his career into two distinct areas, transcendental philosophy and the speculative physics of *Naturphilosophie*, the one devoted to describing the inner history and end of the evolution of consciousness, the other the history of nature, each complementing the other in the story it tells. This division of labour, based on the conception of an autonomous realm of nature distinct from the transcendental subject, finally alienated Schelling from Fichte. The *Naturphilosophie* had a pervasive influence on the Romantic thinking of nature. It is in the transcendental philosophy that the influence of Romantic aestheticism on Schelling can be seen. For nature as product of the absolute has, says Schelling from the transcendental philosophical standpoint (675ff.), two cognitive dimensions. On the one hand, it is unconscious of its tendency. On the other, the fact that it is what it is in the chain of development exemplifies precisely that tendency. Natural things thus instantiate both blind mechanism *and* teleological purposiveness, unconscious and conscious productivity, necessity and freedom; they express the finite and the infinite. But how is this identity to be known *as such*, how is thinking to know the object

not only as object but *also* as manifestation of absolute identity without falling back into division? Only, Schelling insists, in the mode of aesthetic cognition, which in this pre-empt the completion of philosophy's task. The genius, driven by dark creative forces analogous to those of the absolute, produces by acts which are both conscious and unconscious art which sublates all oppositions in the image of absolute harmony. The infinite, thus finitely expressed, is beauty (688), and art, though an artificial product, reveals in this sense the full truth of the natural process. Art is thus an intuitive mode of knowing which uniquely shows both opposition and knowledge thereof *as* identity, yet without reducing identity to a mere object, and so destroying it. Art in this way represents what philosophy cannot yet, and philosophy (echoing Hölderlin's Hyperion) must in this sense end as it began, in poetry (697).

Schelling's *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* marks the apogee of aestheticist influence over philosophical theories of cognition in our epoch. In its wake came another variant of the demand for extending the legislation of the aesthetic into the cognitive domain: aesthetic natural science. Goethe, whose poetry (e.g. 'Mailed', 1770; 'May song') constantly turns on the harmonisation of subject and nature, had long been a pioneer of this (and consequently an outsider to the natural scientific establishment). Confessedly unphilosophical, he had nonetheless always sought to support his explorations of natural phenomena by appeals to leading philosophers. Thus, having instinctively rejected as abstract and fragmentary the dominant mathematical and analytical methods of Enlightenment scientific research (most famously in his polemic against Newton's colour theory methodology), he sought to support his alternative – holistic intuition of living nature in its simplest, most universal forms, or 'Urphänomene' – by reference to Spinoza. Similarly, he derived his notion of metamorphosis in plants and animals (of which *Bildung* is a variant) from Leibniz's concept of the developmental law (entelechy) inherent in each monad. Later, when the rigorous methodology of Kantian criticism became the foundational discourse of scientific cognition, Goethe struggled through some of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* and most of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Their arguments for the autonomy of aesthetic and natural phenomena seemed further to confirm his own convictions, and he certainly derived his notions of polarity and intensification ('Polarität', 'Steigerung') as fundamental natural laws from the antagonistic teleology of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. In keeping with ancient tradition (Lucretius) and with his own view, Goethe sometimes also sought to present his scientific findings in aesthetic form. The

didactic elegy 'Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen' (1798; 'The metamorphosis of plants') renders the growth of plants in a strict yet graceful narrative of rhythmic becoming, which unfolds simple form (the 'primal plant' or organ) through oppositional change to highest sophistication, and in its flowering closes the ring of life and death, individual and species. But although Schiller had tentatively offered aestheticisation as a means of popularising specialist professional science, and Jean Paul had argued in *Das Kampaner Thal* for the poet's ability to intuit natural truths before the philosopher, Goethe never quite practised truly aesthetic science. In the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (239) Kant had after all dismissed any thought of aestheticising the sciences: beauty cannot provide authentic cognitions.

It was Hardenberg who first proposed an authentically scientific poetry and the poeticisation of all scientific disciplines. In the field of natural science, his novel *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* (1798; *The apprentices at Sais*) treats in Schellingian fashion a theme from Schiller's Kantian ballad 'Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais' (1795; 'The veiled statue at Sais'). Far more conservative in this area than Goethe, Schiller turns motifs from Egyptian mystery cults into a warning allegory. The neophyte who transgresses the limits of natural scientific exploration and unveils the statue of Isis, goddess of nature, pays with despair and death. Hardenberg's fragmentary narrative contradicts this. His neophyte is an autobiographical narrator, one of many apprentices seeking truth in a temple which looks more like a mining academy (Hardenberg was a highly qualified and experienced mining engineer). All aspire to a dark intuition which will decode the language of nature tantalisingly hinted at in myriad diverse natural formations. The text of *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* is the narrator's individual solution. Its key argument, as in Schelling, is the aesthetic character of absolute cognition. In the main scene, the neophyte listens baffled to a many-sided philosophical debate on nature, one participant in which is thought to represent Fichte. When discussion collapses in a confusion of abstract speculations, the implication is that discursive cognition offers no access to nature's highest truth. At the same time, the entry of a poetic youth into the circle of disputants on nature suggests that poetic intuition and representation is the key – he tells a fairy tale involving the unveiling of the statue which successfully unites the finite and the infinite in the self, and seems to describe the shape of the apprentice's life. Typically for early Romanticism, there is no accompanying sense of threat.

The most ambitious expression of this tendency is Hardenberg's aesthetically founded encyclopaedia, the German counterpart to the

intellectualistic project of D'Alembert and Diderot. The extensive plans are conserved as *Das allgemeine Brouillon* (1798; *The general notebook*). Its key is another variant on the aesthetic construction of the paradoxically absolute standpoint, from which utopian perspective the specialisation and conflict characteristic of natural sciences might appear to have been unified and harmonised. The final form of the project is unclear. Its basic representational strategy appears to have involved developing analogies between the objective domains, languages and methods of the heterogeneous disciplines (NS III, 246, no. 49). As the 'Ich' can only be grasped through the (inadequate) representation of what it is not, so one branch of science necessarily requires explication through another. A network of reciprocating correspondences – this points forward to Baudelaire – can thus be set up (usually involving metaphors), which suggests the inner relatedness of all scientific endeavour. Hardenberg certainly hoped to suggest new cognitive paths,⁴⁴ but the main aim would have been the aesthetic restructuring of the vast amount of material in *Das allgemeine Brouillon*.

The aesthetic thinking of nature in the Romantic style was also the element of the most powerful woman poet-philosopher of the epoch, Karoline von Günderrode (1780–1806). A close friend of Clemens and Bettina Brentano, Günderrode – compared with Hypatia⁴⁵ by her lover, the cultural anthropologist Friedrich Creuzer – was deeply influenced by the early Romantics' proto-feminist theorisations of androgyny. In *Lucinde*, as we have seen, Friedrich Schlegel showed Lucinde sharing in the historically male activity of philosophising with Julius – a radical step, given the dominant Rousseauist gender anthropology of the age, which belittled woman's natural capacity for abstract thought.⁴⁶ In the *Athenaeum* Schlegel published *An Dorothea. Über die Philosophie* (1800; *To Dorothea. On philosophy*), where he elaborated his ideas about women's participation in intellectual life to the model for Lucinde, his wife Dorothea Mendelssohn-Schlegel. This Günderrode extensively excerpted,⁴⁷ and she evidently took seriously the admonition to reflect. Between 1802 and 1804 she intensively studied fundamental Romantic and philosophical texts:⁴⁸ the *Athenaeums-Fragmente*, Novalis. *Schriften*, Schleiermacher's *Über die Religion*, Fichte's *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* (1800; *The destiny of humankind*), Kiesewetter's *Grundriß einer allgemeinen Logik nach Kantischen Grundsätzen* (1795–6; *Outline of Kantian logic*). In her last two years she was preoccupied by (among others) Schelling's *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, his *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797; *Ideas for a philosophy of nature*) and *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* (1799; *First sketch*

of a system of natural philosophy), and finally the history of Oriental religion. Günderröde's papers are not documents of creative reception to rival Hardenberg's *Fichte-Studien*. But they are evidence of mastery in the most advanced philosophical and aesthetic concepts of her day. What emerges from this rigorous autodidactic philosophical schooling is a Romantic poet who writes under the genderless pseudonym 'Tian'. Günderröde thus shares the aesthetic consensus, but asserts something the French and Kantian revolutions did not – woman's autonomy in thought and deed – and often seeks to impart a specifically feminine accentuation to her articulations of Romantic (and classic) discourse. Her version of the Don Juan myth is almost unrecognisable. The great womaniser is transfixed by a princess's beauty and transformed into a Romantic lover for whom only one woman will do, and at his tragic end he is comforted only by her recuperated memory. Elsewhere 'Tian' contributes with robust intellectuality to ongoing Romantic controversies. Her most successful work, the drama *Mahomed, der Prophet von Mekka* (1805; *Mohammed, the prophet of Mecca*), is a poetic reflection on the validity of Schleiermacher's irenic central category of religious experience, 'Anschauung des Unendlichen' ('intuition of the infinite'). At issue here is precisely the authenticity of Mohammed's overwhelming yet subjective visionary intuitions, with their claim to unify – if necessary by the sword – all positive religions. He is presented as himself vacillating agonisingly between faith and doubt, and the intrinsic division of the prophet's psyche is satisfyingly externalised as the antiphonic chorus. The fictive autobiography *Geschichte eines Braminen* (1805; *Story of a Brahmin*)⁴⁹ adopts the outsider's perspective – not a woman, but a man divided between European and Oriental provenance – to preach a sermon against the commercialised egotism of European culture. On the protagonist's spiritual journey the first alternative to this he encounters, Kantian ethics, is rejected as self-fulfilment at the cost of division (306). Commencing a life of introspection in the Orient, Almar turns to religion as the power which re-connects individual and totality. He rejects Mohammed's use of violence to spread the message and, having considered all other major historical religions, ends with what he calls Brahmanism and equates with the unveiling of the statue at Sais, but which is of course a version of Schellingian *Naturphilosophie*: the intuition of the absolute as the primal, infinite ground of all individuality. From this decentred perspective all creatures exist for their own sake, all represent realisations of the infinite 'Naturgeist' (nature spirit) along a ladder of perfection, which comes to unity with itself in the highest forms of consciousness (312f.).

But perhaps the most euphoric and influential expression of aesthetic natural science was a popular lecture series by Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert (1780–1860) delivered in 1806–7: *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaften* (*Views of the dark side of the natural sciences*).⁵⁰ As the title suggests, Schubert claims to have uncovered an unacknowledged dimension of cognition and its vehicle, a buried tradition of esoteric natural science, which leads to ultimate understanding of nature. Its basis is of course another version of Schellingian *Naturphilosophie*, on which is superimposed a Romantic sentimentalist cultural history of the kind we saw in *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*. At the origin of history humankind existed not in a primitive state determined by crude material necessity, but in an idyll of naive harmony with the totality of nature. In this phase reflective thought is admittedly undeveloped. However, the ancient mysteries (such as those stored in the archives of the temple at Sais, or the Atlantis legend) embody an immediate intuition of the primal unity of humanity and nature, individual and totality, past and future – tantamount to speaking the language of nature (3–9). From this golden age, humanity has fallen into an interim state of decline – history – characterised by reflective division of subject and nature. But humanity is also progressing to a recuperated union with nature. Evidence for this is the modern discovery of universal forces such as gravity and magnetism, which seem to confirm the esoteric claim of the inner connectedness of individual and totality. The hint of the possibility of recovering Atlantean wisdom leads Schubert to his thesis. The basic form or law of all creation and change is a state of ultimate negativity, in which the individual returns to its creative origin and from which it emerges into a new, higher station in the chain of being (21). Evidence of this, the dark side of the natural sciences, are those unexplained instances where creatures from one station of being seem to sympathise with or anticipate phenomena in the next. Insects seem sympathetically to anticipate plants' needs during pollination, animals natural disasters. The modish phenomenon of animal magnetism (mesmerism, somnambulism) is another typical irruption of one sphere of being into another. The magnetic trance is, says Schubert, nothing less than the anticipation of humanity's higher life – the next, Atlantean station of being – in this. This is so – despite the radical circumvention of reflective thought which is its condition of possibility (362) – because of the apparent vast potentialisation of human cognitive powers in the trance. The magnetised seem miraculously able to examine inner body states, sense the presence of minerals underground, read letters in closed envelopes, predict the future and explore the past, and the like. They can do so, says Schubert, because

the circumvention of consciousness releases the inherent sympathy of the higher, physical organs of the body with the vast network of affinities that is the universe, and so makes possible the perceptual expansion. Thus history and natural history coincide, and the golden age is rediscovered. The celebration of clairvoyance in the *Ansichten* is the most remarkable expression of German intellectuals' willed faith in a redemptive intuition bought at the price of the total rejection of conscious thinking, but it is also the beginning of the discovery of the unconscious mind.

The first sign of decay in the utopian aesthetic consensus is the *œuvre* of Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811), who shares Schubert's sceptical view of thought's cognitive power. At first Kleist stands foursquare in the new humanistic tradition. He rejects the profession of military officer because tyrannical discipline is incompatible with *Bildung*, and embarks in 1799 on an encyclopaedic programme of self-cultivation in the sciences, philosophy and literature. But philosophy soon becomes problematic. Committed originally to Enlightenment optimism and pre-critical teleological thinking, Kleist soon records in letters around 1800–1 a traumatic loss of faith in the certainty of knowledge. This he ascribes to Kantian philosophy.⁵¹ Kant had founded the certainty of empirical knowledge in the a priori legislative capacity of the subject, but only in so far as it was applied to phenomena under conditions which excluded the possibility of knowing things in themselves or grasping any teleological purpose of 'nature' (except as a merely regulative principle of judgement). If the evidence of the letters is to be credited, Kleist interprets this gain of empirical certainty at the price of metaphysical certainty as leading to radical scepticism. In what may be an allusion to the schematism of judgement, he argues that if all people viewed the world through green lenses, this constitution of their minds would make it impossible to tell if things were objectively green or if greenness were not simply a property of the subject's way of seeing. That being so, not only is there no metaphysical certainty, there is no certainty of empirical knowledge either. If this analogy is meant as an allusion to Kant, then Kleist does not fully recognise how the Kantian categories function to create intersubjective certainty. It is moreover notable that Kleist names only Kant as his benchmark philosopher, ignoring the later solutions of Jacobi, Fichte, Schelling and others.⁵² Kleist is nonetheless thrown by this into existential crisis, rejects philosophy and natural science, and turns to literature. Like Schubert he rejects thinking as a source of truth. As with Schiller, Hölderlin, Hardenberg and Schlegel, the critique of philosophy motivates his poetic vocation.

What he does with literature is another matter. Where his contemporaries never doubted the (variously defined) cognitive or performative power of aesthetic intuition as an alternative to philosophy, Kleist's scepticism is so deeply founded that he places no alternative faith in the aesthetic. He flirts with Schubertian magnetism. In the popular drama *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn* (1810; *Käthchen of Heilbronn*) and the Prussian tragedy *Der Prinz von Homburg* (1811; *The Prince of Homburg*) both Käthchen and the Prince experience magnetic revelations. Alas these cause rather than resolve conflict. Elsewhere, Kleist's literary writings are without exception truth-seeking experiments which explore the limits of both thought and literature. An example of the former is the comedy *Amphitryon* (1806). Of this classical motif Kleist makes an agonising comedy of the identity of indiscernible subjects. Amphitryon, having triumphed in battle, sends his servant Sosias to Thebes with the good news. Unfortunately that very night Jupiter has taken advantage of the general's absence, magically assumed his shape, and pleased his wife Alkmene. Sosias too loses his identity as Mercury takes on Sosias's form. From this a comedy unfolds which constantly threatens tragedy as human cognitive powers (and their emotional consequences) are tested to the limit. The problem is that Jupiter and Mercury are true doubles, indiscernible from their originals, so that not only Alkmene, but even the originals doubt their sense of selfhood, which seems to derive not from autonomous self-definition but from heteronomous determination – the power of the gods. Conversely and paradoxically, even the god's identity is threatened. Alkmene needs a finite image to venerate the otherwise abstract Jupiter, and Jupiter fully unveiled (the allusion to Schiller and Hardenberg is deliberate) would destroy her. But since Jupiter has assumed her husband's form, the god ironically also becomes indiscernible – except through the exercise of arbitrary power.

The great alternative of the age, aesthetic discourse, is given equally short shrift. Grace, the foundational concept of Schiller's epoch-making Kant critique, is cruelly deconstructed in a late essay, *Über das Marionettentheater* (1810, *On the puppet-theatre*). Schiller had aestheticised Kant's rigoristic ethics in *Über Anmut und Würde* by his argument that only grace can harmonise rationality with corporeality and so square the circle of human fulfilment and ethical perfection. Kleist's fictive dialogue counters with a claim that the ultimate expression of grace is paradoxically unattainable by humans. More graceful by far are the soulless, yet gravity-defying puppets dancing in the marketplace (Kleist perhaps has 'Der Tanz' in mind), or the instinctive yet unerring parrying movements of

the bear as he duels with a swordsman. Thus the problem is not the body, but humanity's definitive feature: consciousness. Consciousness is not only incapable of founding identity with certainty. It also militates fundamentally against the institution of aesthetic grace. Once a beautiful youth recognises himself in the mirror of reflective thought, his aesthetic potential for mind–body harmony is lost. Only an infinite consciousness, in which the dualism of the opposition is overcome, promises restitution – in an intuition of the absolute, perhaps. But Kleist offers no prospect of this. His novella *Das Erdbeben in Chili* (1807; *The earthquake in Chile*) puts the fully politicised version of aesthetic education from the *Ästhetische Erziehung* to an equally deconstructive literary test. The French Revolution figures as the natural disaster. After its purging of the corrupt and hierarchical order a rural idyll spontaneously emerges which unmistakably represents the realised aesthetic state. When immediately thereafter the practices of the former regime are re-instituted and the aesthetic state destroyed, Kleist's verdict on Schiller is clear. That state cannot last either, given the fundamental insecurity of things. Kleist may well have derived this last notion from his friend Adam Müller's philosophical *Lehre vom Gegensatz* (1805; *Theory of opposition*),⁵³ which argued that successive states of thought and things are equally prompted by moments of negation. These generate ever-changing series of oppositional states, without however ever moving through a truly dialectical synthesis in the manner of Schelling – or Hegel. But Kleist doubtless relished expressing this view in the literary language invented by Schiller.

Kleist apart, the fundamental tendencies of the early part of the epoch observed by Friedrich Schlegel were breaking up. When Napoleon crushed the Prussian army at the battle of Jena-Auerstädt in 1806 and the old Germany was occupied and then abolished by the imperialist heir of the Revolution, the optimism and cosmopolitanism characteristic of both literary and philosophical strands of development in Germany modulated into something more conservative and nationalistic. In philosophy, one expression of this is an intensified focus on society or nation rather than the individual. Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1806; *Addresses to the German nation*) transposed the ethical mission of the sovereign ego into the historical and cultural mission of the sovereign German nation. In literature, Schiller's *Die Jungfrau von Orléans* (1800; *The maid of Orléans*) had against the background of the Wars of Coalition put the tragedy of Jeanne d'Arc at the service of national regeneration, as the heroine's moral conflict becomes an inspiring legend of missionary self-sacrifice in the interest of a divided nation. Schiller's earlier solution

to the political problem – aesthetic education proper – is represented here in the court of the ineffectual and irrelevant poet-king René. This early appropriation of aesthetic humanism to propaganda was enthusiastically taken up by writers of the following generation during the epoch of the wars of liberation, 1806–15, and need concern us here no further.

These popularising developments with their strident compensatory affirmations of collective identity are however mirrored at a deeper level by a more radical tendency to undermine the earlier generation's confident theses in literature and philosophy. The later Romantic E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822) probably heard Kant's lectures at university in his native Königsberg, and knew Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. But like all Romantics he engaged primarily as a poet with the received problems of 'Philosophie' and 'Poesie'. Decisively influenced by Karl Philipp Moritz's empirical psychology of the 1780s, Hoffmann became fascinated by the speculative Romantic psychology of Schubert, Johann Christian Reil and Carl Alexander Ferdinand Kluge, which investigated abnormal and psychopathological states of mind. In this tradition, Hoffmann's *œuvre* radically questions the capacity for sovereignty of self-consciousness and seeks to validate unorthodox modes of cognition. Hoffmann particularly admired Schubert's *Symbolik des Traumes* (1814; *The symbolism of dream*).⁵⁴ This development of Schubert's theory in a sense renewed pre-modern dream theory. Most dreams, says Schubert, are significant. The significant ones represent a privileged state of intuitive insight directly related to the magnetic trance. Like the trance, like poetry and indeed nature itself, they are unconscious products of absolute creativity, of the 'hidden poet' in us (*Symbolik*, 3), which impose themselves on the conscious mind and possess the prophetic power of the primal language. Frequently they comment ironically or morally on events in the subject's prosaic waking life, rather like conscience (which Hardenberg called the divine part of our being). But in our post-lapsarian state the primal language has undergone the confusion of Babel. The spiritual tendency of dreams can be mistaken and perverted into demonic temptation. Thus even at this, the highest stratum of its intuitive power, the subject is constitutionally divided – torn between temptation and the voice of conscience. Indeed, the perversion of the poetic inner voice can become so powerful that it takes on the concrete form of something already seen to good effect in Jean Paul and Kleist: the *Doppelgänger* (66). This freshly destabilised version of the Romantic subject, torn between higher self and evil double, is taken up by Hoffmann in his first novel, the fictive autobiography *Die Elixiere des Teufels* (1814–15; *The devil's elixirs*), in order to comment on the Romantic

tradition. As we have seen, the project to recover the transcendental self had made autobiographical forms, from Hardenberg's *Die Lehrlinge zu Saison*, into one of the favourite Classic-Romantic genres. *Die Elixiere des Teufels* ostensibly continues this tradition. The monk Medardus, torn in his Schubertian way between spiritual and sensual tendencies, is at the end of his adventurous life asked by the abbot to write his autobiography for psychotherapeutic purposes. Having done so, Medardus should be able to grasp his life's form and meaning and thus – like Hardenberg's apprentice – hover in sovereign self-understanding above his contradictions. In fact, the text dramatises its own failure. At a critical moment of moral conflict catalysed by drinking a dubious elixir, Medardus' Schubertian *Doppelgänger*, the ruthless sensualist Viktorin, is born. Unconscious forces within him compel him to take on Viktorin's role. Thereafter he oscillates unpredictably and heart-rendingly between both roles. Various forms of self-analysis – before the authorities of the law, the church, and the new institution of (Reilian) clinical psychotherapy – all fail to heal the intrinsic duplicity of Medardus' person. So, unfortunately, does the aesthetic autobiography. Sometimes the *Doppelgänger* seems a real and concrete individual, sometimes a mere projection, sometimes he seems to have died, yet again he re-surfaces, so that Viktorin's status as fact or fiction remains agonisingly ambiguous. Worse, this figure from the past colonises the identity of Medardus as he writes in the present. This dislocated perspective is shared by the reader. *Die Elixiere des Teufels*, then, is not merely a literary version of Schubert's theory. It is also a deconstructive commentary in the Romantic tradition on the Romantic tradition. Both pillars of authority on which that tradition stands are undermined: the recuperable autonomy of the subject and of the text as means to that. *Die Elixiere des Teufels* also features a puppet-play – from Kleist to Büchner always the signal for an attack on the aesthetic humanist tradition. But this time the target is not Schillerian grace. In the puppet-play of David and Goliath,⁵⁵ presented by the novel's *raisonneur*, the artist-fool Belcampo-Schönfeld, Goliath figures with a disproportionate giant head as the representative of consciousness, moral guardian and censor of the animal in us – with predictable results. Nor does Hoffmann spare *Naturphilosophie* or magnetism. *Die Bergwerke zu Falun* (1814; *The mines at Falun*) exploits another Schubertian motif. In his *Ansichten* (215f.) Schubert told how (thanks to vitriolated water in the shaft) a young miner's body was recovered perfectly preserved many decades after his disappearance – to the shock of his aged wife. Of this Hoffmann makes a response to the Classic-Romantic Isis myth. The young miner Elis's disappearance

is motivated by the desire to encounter the divine queen of nature, who has conquered his young wife in his affections. The discovery of his petrified body – preserved for eternity, yet lifeless – mockingly deconstructs Hardenberg's understanding of the Isis myth. Hoffmann's *Magnetiseur* (1814; *The mesmerist*) exposes the magnetic rapport as merely an exploitive power-relationship between the mesmerist and his suggestible victim.

With Schubert, Kleist and Hoffmann, the high esteem of philosophers and poets for aesthetic intuition as a panacea for the sovereign yet divided Kantian subject passes its high point. Against this background, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), schoolfriend of Schelling and Hölderlin, and Fichte's successor as Professor of Philosophy at Berlin University in 1815, draws the sum of the epochal tendencies in both philosophy and art. His synthesis is deeply critical of the spirit of the age, and it set the terms of dialogue for the rest of the nineteenth century. He shares many idealist and Romantic convictions. Indeed, in proposing subjectivity as the primal and ultimate reality, he is more radical even than Kant and the Romantics. In a work often regarded as the introduction to his mature philosophy, the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807; *Phenomenology of spirit*),⁵⁶ Hegel argues that subjectivity is identical with being or living substance (23). But this overarching subjectivity cannot be adequately grasped in its most general or abstract form, in some such formulation as 'the absolute'. Such an assertion is at best a beginning. To be adequately grasped, the abstract concept must be understood as result, fully and concretely realised. Hegel thus (like Schelling) focuses on the process of becoming from abstract to concrete – here called phenomenology – whereby the absolute unfolds itself by negation to full self-knowledge in and through the particular concrete domains of reality – nature, history, the state, art, religion and philosophy. But the way this is achieved exposes a gulf between Hegel and Romanticism. If the Romantic commitment to intuitionism is about anything, it is about overcoming division and the consciousness of division. Yet Romanticism falls short of this, the definitive modern aspiration. For intuition, its chosen mode of exhibiting the mediation of the absolute, in fact merely perpetuates the dualism it seeks to overcome. In a well-known passage (where Hegel probably has Schellingian *Naturphilosophie* or Hardenberg's aesthetic encyclopaedism in mind), he notes caustically that merely to confront the absolute idea (true in itself, he does not doubt) with empirical material with which it might be claimed to be identical, so that all is indifferent in the absolute, amounts to empty formalism. This is not systematically

mediated self-realisation of abstract concept and particularised reality so much as capricious divinations ('Einfälle') (21) and empty depth (17). Famously deconstructing Hardenberg's central poetic metaphor for the dark insight of intuition, Hegel concludes that this, so far as philosophy is concerned, is the night in which all cows are black (22). His stark alternative is to redefine the cognitive potential and ontological status of thought. To exclude reflection from truth as they (and in a sense Kant) did is to mistake the nature of reason (25). A formulation such as the absolute may be true *in* itself ('an sich'), but is not yet fully mediated with its otherness, the sense in which the absolute *in* its otherness (being, particularised difference, reality) is also *for* itself ('für sich'). Subjectivity rethought is thus nothing less than the dialectical movement of reflective thought through this negation to the *negation of the negation* and full self-consciousness *in and for itself*. This becoming – when fully thought through – is spirit, truly systematic self-knowledge, philosophy. Hegel's epistemology thus contrasts strongly not only with Romantic intuitionism but also with Kant. Kant had concluded that the ultimate reality of things in themselves was by definition inaccessible to our faculty of thought, structured as it is by the categories. Hegel points out that Kant often transgresses his own set epistemological boundaries: he seems to recognise some cognitive dignity in aesthetic ideas; and his claim that we cannot know things in themselves paradoxically implies some kind of knowledge of them. For Hegel, thought properly understood is the essence of intelligible being, and thinking things through contradiction to reconciliation is itself the disclosure of truth. There is no domain transcending thought.

This uncompromising advocacy of self-transparent thought as the sole adequate vehicle of the pursuit of truth leads to a characteristic re-evaluation of aesthetic cognition in Hegel's mature philosophy, which (by contrast to the *Phänomenologie*) works out the realisation of the idea in world history. Nature and the state are objective realisations of the idea. But the self-knowledge of spirit must go beyond these particular realisations and reflect the absolute as such, free, as Hegel says in his *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (1820–9; *Lectures on aesthetics*),⁵⁷ of the straitening confines of existence (XIII, 128–39). Hegel sees three vehicles of this, in ascending order of sophistication – art, religion and philosophy. In all of them we experience not relative, but higher, substantial truth, in which all contradictions are harmonised (XIII, 137f.), including, for example, that of spirit and nature. The way in which this epistemological hierarchy is established follows the pattern of the dialectic and the critique of modes of cognition. They are distinguished only by form. Art presents knowledge

of the absolute harmony and unity of spirit in an individual, sensual and objective form, for intuition and feeling: the absolute idea, no less, in an adequate sensual manifestation as a unity of form and content. In this, Hegel seems for a moment to adopt the Romantic position. He is however merely registering the temper of the Romantic age, only to transcend it at once. For art is not the highest mode of self-consciousness for spirit. Its sensual mode of representing the absolute is art's own limit. Spirit needs to know itself in a form adequate to its own inwardness, and rejects the externality of art. And this is the case in Hegel's epoch, when art has already achieved its maximum. In religion the absolute is known in the more adequate, subjective and inward mode. But religion too has its limit. Religious consciousness is characteristically emotionalised and devotional, lacking in clarity. And this, of course, is the work of the highest mode of spirit's self-knowledge, philosophy, which unifies thought, as the highest form of objectivity, with religion's subjectivity.

Hegel thus recognises the dominance of Romanticism in his own epoch of post-Goethean modernity, but only in order to condemn it. In terms of art history, he distinguishes three modes of aesthetic expression within the basic definition: the symbolic, the classical, and the Romantic. The most primitive, the symbolic, is dominated by an undeveloped – abstract – notion of the idea, which is held to be representable (Hegel is thinking of Oriental cultures) by any natural creature. This leads to an inevitable aesthetic tension between the symbol and the idea. In classical art, the idea has attained full understanding as concrete spirit or true inwardness, for which the only adequate expression (Hegel is thinking of Greece and Goethe) is the human form. In classical art, by contrast with the symbolic, the idea is not embodied *as* the sensual reality of the human form; human form represents sensually the spiritual objectivity of the idea. In this sense classical art is the fragile aesthetic ideal. Romantic art, as always in Hegel, represents an unharmonious and passing synthesis of self-knowledge. As characteristically inward, spirit at this level by definition cannot be adequately expressed in art. Romantic art recognises this. Intrinsically divided, it embodies the tension between true inwardness and *any* sensual representation, and – pointing to religion – rejects the latter. This is meant to suggest that not only Romantic art, but *all* art will pass away (at least in this function), and it leads Hegel to a fierce critique of Romanticism (in the work of Friedrich Schlegel) which for decades determined its prestige. Romanticism is egocentricity, intuitionism and frivolous irony. Fichte he presents as propounding the ability of the self to create a disposable reality by an act of will. The Romantic

artist is the aesthetic analogue of this, a genius creating his own aesthetic disposable world which is lacking in fundamental earnestness and open to ironic destruction at any moment. As with the Schelling critique of the *Phänomenologie*, then, the Romantic aesthetic subject stops half-way, cannot go beyond negativity to full mediation with the real, and remains trapped in the prison of the self whilst yearning helplessly to transcend it. The expression of the idea as irony thus dominates Romantic art. This is neither Schlegel's well-intentioned transcendental buffoonery nor the truly comic, but a grotesque caricature of comedy, in which even what is valuable in the aesthetic representation is wilfully destroyed by irony, valued as a principle for its own sake. This is mirrored by Hegel's interpretations of Romantic literature. Drama, for example, is for Hegel the genre capable of showing beauty – the overcoming of conflict – in its most profound development (XIII, 267). Kleist is thus attacked for the lasting consciousness of division in his dramas.⁵⁸ Unsurprisingly, Hegel condemns the Romantic fashion for 'magnetic' characters. This is the symptom of intrinsic division. Kleist's *Käthchen* and *Prince of Homburg* prefer the trance to clear thinking (XIV, 201 f.). They have no true character, being inhabited by a force which is yet other to them, and thus fall prey to dark powers. In true art, by contrast, there should be nothing dark, true characters should always be at rest in themselves, and such literature is the vapid, frivolous and empty product of a sickness of mind. But the ironic character, constantly turning into its opposite, is the Romantic ideal (XIII, 314 f.). And precisely this is the problem of E. T. A. Hoffmann (XIII, 289, 315).

Hegel's judgements are in general admirably informed, apt and perspicuous. Nonetheless it should be clear that Hegel's insistently harmonistic standpoint makes him blind to Romantic literature's powerful disclosure of the existential pathology and suffering of the divided modern person and of the pre- or unconscious strata whence they emerge; Romantic irony is not as empty of content as Hegel suggests. Moreover history appears to disagree with Hegel's judgement on the end of art, which has so far usurped religion's position in modern culture and thus confirmed the Romantic rather than the Hegelian view of cultural history.⁵⁹ Far from dying, the tradition of self-consciously reflexive, experimental art inaugurated by Romanticism has established itself as the basic form of modernist literature in our search for meaning, recognisably extending through the traditional canon of micro-epochs to the present. And Hegel's philosophical standpoint, his fundamental concept of self-transparent, self-present thought, the crux of his challenge to the

Schellingian and early Romantic philosophies of identity, has also failed to establish a consensus in modern philosophy. Philosophers in the French semiological tradition deny the capacity of thought to be self-present in the system of differential signifiers.⁶⁰ Those in the Wittgensteinian tradition deny the possibility of a universal meta-language such as Hegelian philosophical discourse.⁶¹ Even those in the Hegelian-Marxian tradition deny the capacity of philosophical dialectic to express the contradictions of modern industrialised culture.⁶² Most recently, those standing between the continental and analytic traditions of philosophy reassert the late Schellingian critique of Hegel – that the bare facts of existence cannot be brought as such before thought, but require intuitive presentation – as the inauguration of the existential tradition and a revalidation of self-ironising Romantic discourse.⁶³ Thus the Romantic tradition in both art and philosophy has – so far – outlived Hegel.

Goethe's *Faust* (1808–32), in a sense, is the prime instance of this. Faust is the ultimate divided Romantic hero, who instantiates in literature precisely the figure of thought set out by Hegel in the preface of the *Phänomenologie*. Emblematically imprisoned in his narrow, high-ceilinged Gothic study, he rejects metaphysics but yearns to re-establish the connection between his person and the life of the universe. Until now, the university has been the vehicle of that ambition. But its characteristically abstract form of scholarship is no match for his inner desire. Experimental physics will not raise the veil of nature. He has exhausted the knowledge inventory of all four contemporary faculties (theology, medicine, law, and alas philosophy too). Faust's turn to an alternative form of knowledge both esoteric and intuitionist thus mirrors the trend of the age. Yet Goethe presents this with critical distance. The sign of the macrocosm, with its intoxicating spectacle of living, interwoven totality and individuality, promises all, but remains mere spectacle – doubtless a verdict on the vulgar Romantic tradition. And Faust's project is diminished still further through his subsequent rejection by the lower, but no less transcendent 'Erdegeist' (spirit of the earth). Reduced to the typically modern state of an absurd acceptance of existence without meaning (except that which he himself can bestow), Faust finally receives in Mephistopheles not so much a devil as a principle of negation. What follows, then, is the epic dramatisation of the modern subject's search for meaning in the age for which the absolute is present only as negation. Faust continues to value the spontaneity and immediacy of intuitive experience. But he equates that neither with poetry (HA III, 59; lines 1788ff.) nor with absolute knowledge (HA III, 149; line 4727). One particular

interest of the work is to set that drama in a moral framework – this is the point of the devil's presence in a post-Christian work. But another is its representativeness. This is why Faust seeks to encompass in his person (in both parts of the drama) nothing less than the sum of human experience. In this ambition, *Faust*, for all its anti-Romantic tendencies, is something like the counterpart to Hegelian philosophy in aesthetic form.

Thus if the domestic tragedy of Gretchen in part one of the drama represents the first opening of Faust's divided and desiccated psyche to the transforming (if not yet redemptive) power of love, part two vastly widens the tragic compass. Gretchen turns out (for the moment) merely to have prefigured the true object of Faust's Romantic yearning: Helena, ideal of classical beauty. Goethe uses Faust's romance with Helena, whom he first conjures as an aesthetic illusion but then really encounters, as a structure through which to reflect poetically on the deepest tendencies of the age and indeed of occidental cultural history – perhaps the highest fulfilment of the literary side of Schlegel's dictum of 1798. These include republican and monarchic forms of government: the site of the encounter with Helen, centre of part two, is the banks of the upper Peneios, scene of the battle between imperial Caesar and republican Pompey. But they also include reflections on the dominant contemporary theories of the genesis of life on earth (Vulcanism and Neptunism in the persons of Anaxagoras and Thales), and even a harsh, aesthetically founded critique of the introduction of paper money to fund war (an allusion to the trend-setting *assignats* of the French Revolution). There is another swipe at Fichteanism. The theme invested with most significance is, however, the great cultural division of the epoch: the confrontation of classicism and Romanticism, antiquity and modernity, in Helena and Faust. But the fate of their child, Euphorion, gives Goethe's verdict. Based on Byron, Euphorion is the very incarnation of poetry, love and freedom (including political freedom). But Icarus-like he kills himself, through impatience. Helena's fate as *femme fatale* is confirmed. As the combination of beauty and happiness proves too unstable, she chooses to return to the realm of the shades – memory. Faust continues as he must to struggle, and the drama now incorporates great themes – the technological mastery of nature and colonialism – which concern modernity to this day. Yet tragic resignation, programmed into it by the negativity of the pact with the devil, haunts the rest of the text. Faust's modernistic assent to life involves the acceptance of existential restlessness, whereby fulfilment – the intuition of the beautiful moment – would also entail death. When Faust appears for a moment to be satisfied in contemplation of

his deeds, Mephistopheles closes the trap, but he is confuted by a redeemer God on a point of interpretation. But even this is not the end for Faust, who, it is suggested, will now progress to higher spheres of being under Gretchen's tutelage. Even after Helena, then, he remains a fragment, possessed by the memory of wholeness, unendingly in pursuit of perfection.

NOTES

- 1 Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeums-Fragment* no. 216, in *KFSA* II, 198f.
- 2 See Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991) (first edition 1962).
- 3 On subjectivity in modern German philosophy and modern culture see Julian Roberts, *The logic of reflection. German philosophy in the twentieth century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992) and Charles Taylor, *Sources of the self. The making of modern identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- 4 See Manfred Frank, "'Intellectuale Anschauung". Drei Stellungnahmen zu einem Deutungsversuch von Selbstbewußtsein: Kant, Fichte, Hölderlin/Novalis', in Ernst Behler and Jochen Hörisch (eds.), *Die Aktualität der Frühromantik* (Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, Zürich: Schöningh, 1987), pp. 96–126, esp. pp. 96ff.; Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and subjectivity. From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 20.
- 5 See Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch* (1787), in *Werke*, 7 vols. (Leipzig: Fleischer 1812–25), vol. II, pp. 3–288, esp. pp. 143ff.; compare his *Ueber den transcendentalen Idealismus*, vol. II, pp. 305f.
- 6 See Jacobi's contribution to the *Pantheismusstreit* (pantheism controversy), in *Werke*, vol. IV/2, supplement 7, pp. 125–67. Jacobi's ringing phrase *salto mortale* is found earlier in his version of the controversy with Lessing, vol. IV/1, p. 59.
- 7 See J. G. Fichte, *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre, für Leser, die schon ein philosophisches System haben*, in *Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte, 8 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), vol. I, pp. 451–518, here esp. pp. 469–88.
- 8 See note seven.
- 9 This is based on Fichte's *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre, als Handschrift für seine Zuhörer* (1794), in *Werke*, vol. I, pp. 83–328, esp. pp. 91 ff.
- 10 '[M]ich selbst, ganz wie ich da bin, auszubilden, das war dunkel von Jugend auf mein Wunsch und meine Absicht' (HA VII, 290).
- 11 See Nicholas Saul, 'Aesthetic humanism. German literature 1790–1830', in Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (ed.), *The Cambridge history of German literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 202–71.
- 12 In *Werkausgabe*, vol. VII, pp. 7–102 and pp. 103–302.

- 13 In Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert, 5 vols., 6th edn (Munich: Hanser, 1980), vol. v, pp. 433–88.
- 14 In *Werkausgabe*, vol. x, pp. 73–301.
- 15 See Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979) (first edition, 1947). Also Hartmut Böhme and Gernot Böhme, *Das Andere der Vernunft. Zur Entdeckung von Rationalitätsstrukturen am Beispiel Kants* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985) and Nicholas Saul (ed.), *The body in German literature around 1800, Special number, German Life & Letters* 52:2 (1999), 'Introduction', pp. 115ff.
- 16 Schiller, *Werke*, vol. v, pp. 570–669.
- 17 In Plato's *Republic* of course poets had been banished from the polis.
- 18 See Silvio Vietta, *Die ästhetische Moderne. Eine problemgeschichtliche Darstellung der deutschsprachigen Literatur von Hölderlin bis Thomas Bernhard* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992), esp. pp. 21–33.
- 19 On Goethe see Géza von Molnár, *Goethes Kantstudien* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1993) and 'Goethe and critical philosophy: The *Wissenschaftslehre* as supplement to his Kant-Studies', in Clifford A. Bernd, Ingeborg Henderson and Winder M. McConnell (eds.), *Romanticism and beyond. A Festschrift for John F. Fetzer* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 57–77.
- 20 Molnár, *Goethes Kantstudien*, p. 19.
- 21 See for example the footnote in the sixth letter (Schiller, *Werke*, vol. v, p. 577) and the reference to the 'Selbsttätigkeit' (self-activity) of reason (642).
- 22 Recall Socrates' view of human nature's basic creativity in the *Symposium* (205c), in *The collected dialogues of Plato including the letters*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 557.
- 23 See Manfred Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp. 7–24, esp. pp. 16ff.; also Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory. The philosophy of German literary theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), esp. pp. 65–89, 272ff.
- 24 See *Kritisches Fragment* no. 115 (*KFSA* II, 161); 'Über die Philosophie. An Dorothea' (*KFSA* VIII, 52); *Ideen-Fragment* no. 48 (*KFSA* II, 261); *Ideen-Fragment* no. 108 (*KFSA* II, 267).
- 25 The best edition is *F.D.E. Schleiermacher: Hermeneutik und Kritik. Mit einem Anhang sprachphilosophischer Texte Schleiermachers*, ed. and introduced by Manfred Frank (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977).
- 26 See for example Socrates' paradoxical assertion that his wisdom consists in knowing what he does not know, in *The defence of Socrates*, 20d–21e, *Collected dialogues*, pp. 3–26, esp. pp. 7f.
- 27 Letter to Ludwig Tieck, 23 February 1800, *NS* IV, 322.
- 28 See *Parmenides*, 156a–157b, *Collected dialogues*, pp. 920–56, esp. pp. 947f.
- 29 See Géza von Molnár, *Romantic vision, ethical context. Novalis and artistic autonomy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 108.

- 30 The term is from Herbert Uerlings, *Friedrich von Hardenberg, genannt Novalis. Werk und Forschung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991), p. 14.
- 31 See Theodor Ziolkowski, 'James Joyces Epiphanie und die Überwindung der empirischen Welt in der modernen deutschen Prosa', *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift* 35 (1961), 594–616. On the *Parmenides* in the context of Kierkegaard see Julian Roberts, *German philosophy. An introduction* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988), p. 199. The Parmenidean moment is central to Walter Benjamin's aesthetics of modernism. See his 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. T. W. Adorno, Gershom Scholem, Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhauser, vol. 1/2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), pp. 691–704, esp. p. 695; also, for the concept of 'Jetztzeit', pp. 701 ff. The tradition is continued in Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 52, and Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Ästhetik der Plötzlichkeit. Zum Augenblick des ästhetischen Scheins* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp. 7 ff., 180 ff.
- 32 In Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Michael Knaupp, 3 vols. (Munich and Vienna: Hanser, 1992–3), vol. II, pp. 49f.
- 33 In *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I, pp. 609–760.
- 34 See *The collected dialogues of Plato*, pp. 526–74, esp. pp. 553–63.
- 35 *The collected dialogues of Plato*, pp. 562f. (211a–212c).
- 36 Lucinde, as critics have pointed out, never has the chance to realise her androgyny.
- 37 In Clemens Brentano, *Werke*, eds. Wolfgang Frühwald, Bernhard Gajek, and Friedhelm Kemp, 2nd edn, 4 vols. (Munich: Hanser, 1973–8) (1st edn, 1963–8), vol. II, pp. 7–458.
- 38 Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (§2), in *Werke*, ed. Norbert Miller, 6 vols. (Munich: Hanser, 1959–63), vol. V, pp. 7–456, esp. pp. 31 ff. (§2).
- 39 In *Werke*, vol. III, pp. 11–830, esp. pp. 766f., 800. Compare the *Clavis Fichtiana*, in *Werke*, vol. III, pp. 1013–56.
- 40 In *Werke*, vol. IV, pp. 563–626.
- 41 Either Hegel, Schelling or Hölderlin. See Franz Rosenzweig, 'Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus Ein handschriftlicher Fund', *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse* (1917), 5. Abhandlung. An English translation is appended to Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and subjectivity*, pp. 255 ff. More recently, Henry Harris, *Hegel's development* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972–88), vol. 1, offers strong arguments for Hegel's authorship.
- 42 In *Schriften*, ed. Manfred Frank, 6 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), vol. I, pp. 39–134.
- 43 In Schelling, *Schriften*, vol. I, pp. 395–702.
- 44 Hardenberg to Friedrich Schlegel, 7 November 1798, *NS* IV, 263.
- 45 In Karoline von Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke und ausgewählte Studien*, ed. Walther Morgenthaler, Karin Obermaier and Marianne Graf, 3 vols. (Basle and Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 1990–1), vol. III, p. 344.

- 46 See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'éducation* (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1966), pp. 465ff.
- 47 Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. II, pp. 278–81.
- 48 See Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. II, pp. 273–417.
- 49 Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I, pp. 303–14.
- 50 Dresden: Arnold, 1808.
- 51 See Heinrich von Kleist, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Helmut Sembdner, 2 vols. (Munich: Hanser, 1993) (first edn 1952), vol. II, pp. 634, 636f.
- 52 Although Fichte's *Bestimmung des Menschen* (Berlin: Voss, 1800), pp. 91 ff., also offers a strikingly similar argument and image. See Ernst Cassirer, *Heinrich von Kleist und die Kantische Philosophie* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1919).
- 53 See Adam Müller, *Kritische, ästhetische und philosophische Schriften*, ed. Walter Schroeder and Werner Siebert, 2 vols. (Berlin and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1976), vol. II, pp. 195–248, esp. pp. 201 ff., 215ff.
- 54 Bamberg: C. F. Kunz.
- 55 *Die Elixire des Teufels*, in E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Werke*, ed. Walter Müller-Seidel, 4 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), vol. II pp. 248ff.; compare pp. 217f.
- 56 In G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), vol. III.
- 57 Hegel, *Werke*, vols. XIII–XV.
- 58 In the *Philosophie des Rechts*; Hegel, *Werke*, vol. VII, p. 267.
- 59 For an alternative view, see Stephen Houlgate, *Freedom, truth and history. An introduction to Hegel's philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 168–75.
- 60 See Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972).
- 61 See Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne* (Paris: Minuit, 1979).
- 62 See Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie*.
- 63 See Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and modern European philosophy. An introduction* (London: Routledge, 1993).