

German Aesthetics as a response to Kant's *Third Critique*: The thought of Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Schlegel in the 1790s

by

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SUMMARY

This thesis is about the way aesthetic thought changed or developed in Germany in the years immediately after the publication of Immanuel Kant's third critique – *A Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Besides many comparatively minor developments, it identifies three important changes in aesthetic thinking after Kant. Firstly, there was an increased emphasis on the integrated and interdependent nature of the human thinking that Kant had been more concerned to classify and analyse. Secondly, the change in aesthetics marks the change from Enlightenment classicism to Early German Romanticism. Thirdly, the rôle of aesthetics itself changed, from attempting to define the concept of beauty and explain how we perceive it, to claiming that aesthetics is concerned with humanity's search for meaning in the work of art. This last development amounts to a suggestion that the hermeneutic strand in philosophy grew out of early post-Kantian aesthetics.

Three thinkers have been selected as a means of showing these changes. They are Friedrich Schiller, the poet and dramatist, Friedrich Hölderlin, the poet, and Friedrich Schlegel, the literary theorist and essayist. Chronologically, our period begins in 1793 and ends about 1800, just before the death of Kant (1804), the death of Schiller (1805), the mental collapse of Hölderlin (1806), and with the final editions of Schlegel's literary journal, *Athenäum* (1800). This timespan allows a fairly close study of Schiller's influential series of essays on philosophical aesthetics, which he wrote in direct response to the *Third Critique*, re-examining Kant's claim that the judgement of taste is subjective, and expanding Kant's account of how it is possible to create works of art; and also of Friedrich Hölderlin's and Friedrich Schlegel's most productive years, when both worked out aesthetic theories that moved onwards from Schiller, but nevertheless remained indebted to Kant in several respects.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary		1
Introduction	The world that responded to Kant's <i>Critique of the Power of Judgement</i>	4
	Classicism, neo-classicism and the Enlightenment	8
	The move to Romanticism	12
	The search for beauty and the search for meaning	19
	Kant's philosophy and the <i>Critique of the Power of Judgement</i>	24
	Section 1: Friedrich Schiller	
Chapter 1	<i>Kallias oder über die Schönheit</i> : An introduction to the text and its place in Schiller's theoretical writing	49
	Schiller's argument in the <i>Kallias Letters</i>	52
	Implications of the <i>Kallias Letters</i>	59
Chapter 2	<i>Anmut und Würde</i> : Grace, dignity and their place in aesthetics and morality	63
Chapter 3	<i>Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind</i> : Possible ways of explaining Schiller's philosophical position	76
	Comparing the theory of drives with Kant's model	87
Chapter 4	The theory of aesthetics that Schiller based on his general philosophy	93
	A final comparison with Kant	102
Chapter 5	The implications for art of Friedrich Schiller's theory	112
	Schiller, <i>Anmut und Würde</i> and the classical past	114
	<i>The Aesthetic Letters</i>	116
	Semblance and the earlier writings	117
	<i>On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature</i>	122

Section 2: Friedrich Hölderlin

Chapter 6	Hölderlin's pantheism and the notion of Being	143
Chapter 7	Memory and its structural rôle in Hölderlin's philosophical thought	166
Chapter 8	Spinoza, Fichte, fate and freedom	183
	Love	196
Chapter 9	Hölderlin on composition and aesthetic appreciation	205
	The poet and language	206
	Poetic tones	211
	Creating and feeling the divine moment	215
	Generalising from the specific	226
	The significance of beauty	233

Section 3: Friedrich Schlegel

Chapter 10	Friedrich Schlegel, the ancients and the moderns	240
Chapter 11	<i>Über Lessing</i> : The light this essay and other <i>Charakteristiken</i> throw on Schlegel's thought	271
Chapter 12	Key terms used by Friedrich Schlegel – The <i>Fragmente</i>	304
	<i>Poesie</i>	305
	Irony	308
	<i>Witz</i>	318
	<i>Romantisch</i> and <i>Roman</i>	325
	Schlegel's achievement	335
Conclusion		340
Appendix	Diagrams to illustrate Schiller's sense and form drives	352
Bibliography	Bibliography and a note on editions and translations	355

INTRODUCTION

The world that responded to Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement*

This thesis examines the philosophical ideas of Friedrich Schiller (1759 - 1805), Friedrich Hölderlin (1770 - 1843) and Friedrich Schlegel (1772 - 1829), three writers active in the German states during the 1790s. The intention is to set out the way in which they contributed to a major change that we shall see took place in aesthetics in the ten years following the publication of Kant's *Third Critique*,¹ as Enlightenment classicism gave way to Romanticism. This is done by analysing a selection of texts from each writer. While giving an exposition of these three men's ideas, we shall also be drawing attention to the ideas they shared with Kant or with one another, and to the extent to which they departed from or modified ideas expressed in the *Third Critique*. It will be on this basis that we shall reach our conclusion that they changed the aesthetic criteria for producing and evaluating the arts. Instead of trying to identify or analyse how we perceive beauty, they began to encourage us to find meaning in the work of art.

None of our writers was a professional academic philosopher, though all three had an educated philosophical background. In the philosophical canon they are thus minor figures. However, together they provide a good illustration of what happened in the intellectual world during the last decade of the eighteenth century. The 1790s were years during which university towns, such as Göttingen, in the biological sciences; Jena, in Philosophy and Literature; and Berlin, in Philosophy, Geography and the sciences were centres of progressive and original research.² In Königsberg Kant

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, (ed.) Heine F. Klemme and Piero Giordanetti, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2001.

Translated as: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. The *Third Critique* was first published in 1790, with a second edition in 1791.

² Richards, Robert J., *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the age of Goethe*, Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002,

continued his work, which was disseminated constantly around the German speaking states.³ Politically, Germany shared the mixed feelings of the rest of Europe concerning the French Revolution. In the intellectual circles in which Schiller, Hölderlin and Schlegel moved, the revolution was seen as a hope for bourgeois enfranchisement and fuller participation in political life. At varying rates this enthusiasm dimmed, as a result of the Terror, as a result of the French invasion of Mainz in 1797, and as it became clear that Napoleon's ambitions were both despotic and expansionist.

Three figures have been selected for study, but the choice of possible subjects was wide. Kant, Reinhold, Jacobi, Mendelssohn, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Novalis, Niethammer, Schleiermacher all contributed significantly to the philosophy of this decade and beyond; without doubt, a moment's extra thought could add more names to the list. Not only the number of serious philosophers active during the period is surprising, but also, given the fragmentary political condition of Germany in the 1790s,⁴ the extent to which these people kept in contact with one another and sustained an academic dialogue is impressive.⁵ Strict decisions therefore had to be taken in order to limit the material covered in this thesis. To chart the mesh of contemporary influences at work on any single thinker would risk an impossibly unwieldy, expanding regress.⁶ Of the thinkers mentioned above, Schelling and Hegel are generally thought of

³ As Friedrich Schlegel notes in *Athenäums-Fragmente*, 104.

⁴ Walter M. Simon, 'Variations in Nationalism during the great Reform Period in Prussia', in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 59, no.2, Jan. 1954, p.306. Available at: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-8762%28195401%2959%3A2%3C305%3AVINDTG%3E2.0.CO%3B2-%23> (accessed 11.06.07).

P.H. Gaskill, 'Hölderlin and revolution', in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, vol.XII, 1976, pp.118 - 136.

⁵ Dieter Henrich, 'Hölderlin on Judgement and Being: A study in the history of the origins of Idealism' in (ed.) Eckart Förster, *The Course of Remembrance and other Essays*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1997, p.71.

⁶ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, (ed.) David S. Pacini, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2003, p.77, offers a concise and useful diagram, similar to a genealogical tree, that goes some way to addressing this question.

as having contributed significantly to the development of European aesthetics, and it may at first sight seem surprising that they have not been included in this survey. However, Hegel was still concentrating on his theological studies during the 1790s, and had not yet turned to aesthetics or other areas of philosophy. Our neglect of Schelling needs a little more explanation. He and Friedrich Hölderlin discussed issues that were central to Hölderlin's work throughout the 1790s and the very early 1800s, but Schelling was establishing himself as an academic idealist philosopher, whereas Hölderlin's engagement with philosophy consistently fed into his aesthetic and poetic work. Schelling's work on aesthetics also comes just slightly later in his career after 1800,⁷ and there is a possibility that it was his close association with the literary circle of the Schlegel brothers in Jena that eventually encouraged him to examine the place of aesthetics in his philosophical system. Because choices have had to be made, the focus of the thesis is therefore on three writers with similar motivations and background, in that all were philosophically aware literary practitioners.⁸

Having selected the three thinkers who are to be studied, it has been necessary to decide on a field of their work on which to concentrate. Each had a slightly different range of interests, developed in a slightly different context and for slightly different reasons. All three, however, were interested in radical politics and in aesthetics. Following the publication of Kant's *Third Critique* in 1790, aesthetics presented problems to be resolved, and they each provided a new approach in response to this. It happens that all three also foresaw or hoped for political consequences to result from

⁷ F. W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, appeared in 1800. F. W. J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, was written 1804-5, F. W. J. Schelling, *Concerning the relation of the plastic arts to nature*, in 1807.

⁸ The only book that has also selected these same three writers, so far as I know, is (ed.) J.M. Bernstein, *Classical and Romantic German Aesthetics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. The book is an English language anthology of extracts from writings taken from a rather longer period than we have chosen. Several writers are briefly represented there, but Bernstein's own introduction focuses on Schiller, Hölderlin and F. Schlegel, because they exemplify the development from classical to Romantic. We, too, shall make this claim.

these innovations, but this is one point at which a, possibly arbitrary, line has been drawn, beyond which this thesis does not extend. The richness of their aesthetic thought unfortunately precludes the additional pursuit of any political implications. The impact of their aesthetics on the world of literature alone, admittedly a small area of artistic and cultural activity, was substantial, and will furnish this thesis with more than enough interesting and thought-provoking content in its own right.⁹

At the start of the decade Schiller was already a highly respected and popular poet and dramatist. Hölderlin and Schlegel were still students, Hölderlin training as a pastor at the Tübinger Stift, Schlegel a law student at the Universities of Göttingen and then Leipzig. Thus, even though these three writers were working during approximately the same timescale, there is a generational difference between Schiller and the two others. The move from the *Third Critique*, their earliest trigger for thought, to their final writings in the eighteenth century is also a move from one cultural world to another. It follows and contributes to the shift from Enlightenment to Romanticism, or from Classicism to Romanticism. It is important to give some kind of overview of what these terms mean, and how they are characterised, but this will be done fairly briefly at this point, because it is hoped that in the course of the thesis, the reader will gradually become aware of how the parameters of aesthetics were changing. Schiller will be seen to have the closest connections with the classicism of the Enlightenment, in search of perfection, though acknowledging that aesthetic perfection is different from logical perfection *per se*. Hölderlin used an identifiable and in some ways prescriptive framework for his aesthetics, but tried to make it more flexible for the creative artist to

⁹ I feel this is a necessary decision, though I acknowledge it may appear to under-value the seriousness with which these writers regarded their social mission. See, for instance, Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990, p.87.

Here, Bowie tells us how Hölderlin's letters point to the danger that art will become socially irrelevant or incomprehensible to the public, if we allow 'a growing alienation of advanced aesthetic production from any effective social role.' He further adds that Hölderlin himself fell into this trap – though this is possibly debatable – and that it is a problem against which modern art now also has to struggle.

apply, and to integrate it more fully into a general philosophy. Most radically, Schlegel attempted to dispense with frameworks and guidelines altogether, because the old values of completion and perfection no longer seemed to make sense. Open-ended change was ineluctable, and might just as well become a virtue in aesthetics as in any other sphere.

Classicism, neo-classicism and the Enlightenment

Through most of the eighteenth century, Enlightenment values of rational enquiry, analysis and justification were accepted in the German-speaking intellectual community as a means of discovering the truth about the world. To speak in sweeping terms, the Enlightenment presumed that these were the means by which mankind would progress, making an increasingly better world, accumulating knowledge and finally coming to the point at which humanity would understand all about the world and how it worked, and would therefore be able ultimately to optimise political, economic and social arrangements permanently. The so-called Enlightenment project was thus enormous, but finite. Classicism in the arts and aesthetics was the counterpart in creative culture of this conviction. Classicism was not the only cultural movement associated with the Enlightenment. The years up until the late 1750s were dominated by neoclassicism. While the relationship between these two schools is somewhat problematic, it illustrates the kinds of change encouraged by Enlightenment thinking.¹⁰ Scholarly archaeological and historical research into the classical civilisations of Greece and particularly Rome revealed such beautiful and skilful paintings and sculptures, and such complexly structured literature that these were taken as models for

¹⁰ Paul H. Fry, 'Classical standards in the period', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.8.

composition initially in France, and thence throughout western Europe. This was neoclassicism, fostered as a standard of taste in Germany mainly by Gottsched.¹¹

Advances in historical studies, and the active rôle of German antiquaries in publicising the archaeological remains of Greece, greatly extended the range of ancient classical resources. From this came Classicism, a better informed view of what Ancient Greece was like, interpreted with the benefit, not only of new resources, but the perspective of a new generation, offering a supposedly authentic interpretation of antiquity, in preference to the stale, French influenced imitations perpetuated by neoclassicism.¹² Baumgarten and Winckelmann were the proponents of Classical theory, Baumgarten providing the word 'aesthetics', or 'perfection in perception', and generalising from the practice of ancient writers to establish standards of composition for German poets;¹³ and Winckelmann analysing the achievements of Greek painting and sculpture, while also attempting to set these works in their perceived cultural context.¹⁴ Chronologically, and because of his admiration for the Roman poet, Horace, Baumgarten is perhaps a neoclassicist rather than a Classicist, but the boundaries are not firm, and he exerted a strong influence throughout the century. In any case, Classicism was itself not a unanimous school. While Winckelmann praised the lofty serenity of the Greeks, exemplified in the statue of Laocoön,

¹¹ Paul H. Fry, 'Classical standards in the period', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.8.

¹² Paul H. Fry, 'Classical standards in the period', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

¹³ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, Halle: 1735.

¹⁴ Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*, (Text der 2. Auflage von 1756), available online at Projekt Gutenberg-DE: http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/?id=5&xid=3142&kapitel=1#gb_found [accessed 19.05.08]

Even given the increased knowledge of Greek life available to Winckelmann, it is still worth noting that some of his assessment, for instance, of the beauty of the Greek people, their dress and their standards of taste are based on artefacts such as a single coin from a particular site. The breadth and depth of his evidence perhaps did not strictly justify the confidence with which he interpreted the culture.

Diese Seele schildert sich in dem Gesichte des Laocoöns... Der Schmerz... äußert sich dennoch mit keiner Wut in dem Gesichte und in der ganze Stellung. ...Der Ausdruck einer so großen Seele gehet weit über die Bildung der schönen Natur.¹⁵

Lessing challenged this view, saying that the decisive factor was not the strength and serenity of Laocoön's own character when faced by pain. The unknown sculptor was responsible for choosing the moment depicted in the sculpture, and on aesthetic grounds, must have decided that it was not only more attractive to show Laocoön just before he completely lost control and screamed out with pain, but further, that by showing the audience a moment from the prolonged period leading up to a final crisis of unendurable pain, the sculptor obliged the audience to call on their own emotions, imagining all the more horribly the course of Laocoön's dreadful suffering.¹⁶ Later in the thesis we shall see that Schlegel regarded Lessing as a man ahead of his time, a thinker who had freed himself of the classical norms around him. Both Winckelmann and Lessing agreed, however, that the sculptor had found the perfect moment of balance, so that beauty could be appreciated and the emotions satisfied. Laocoön and other Greek artefacts remained the ideal for contemporary artists to emulate. However, although the classical tradition tended to concentrate on the appreciation of calm, measured beauty, as supposedly exemplified in the ancient classical world, the Enlightenment aesthetics of Burke and Kant also recognised the paradox of natural sublimity. The sense of awe we experience in the presence of the enormous and

¹⁵ Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*, (Text der 2. Auflage von 1756), §3. available online at Projekt Gutenberg-DE:

http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/?id=5&xid=3142&kapitel=1#gb_found [accessed 19.05.08]

This soul is portrayed in the face of the Laocoön statue... Pain... is nevertheless not manifested with any fury in the face and the overall bearing... The expression of such a great soul goes far beyond the representation of beautiful nature.

¹⁶ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön*, Ch. 3. available online at Projekt Gutenberg-DE: <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/?id=12&xid=1617&kapitel=4&cHash=f1dedc427f2> [accessed 22.05.08]

see also: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: 'An essay on the limits of painting and poetry'*, in (ed.) Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger, *Art in Theory 1648 - 1815*, Malden MA; Oxford UK; Carlton Aus: Blackwell, 2000, p.483.

potentially destructive majesty of nature is also an aesthetic experience.¹⁷ Kant's position as a proponent of classicism is a natural corollary of his general philosophy, which analysed human thought as a relatively static and universal process. Thus, in aesthetics he argued that good taste was a universal, shared perception and that, by contemplation, we can recognise beauty, the true end of all artistic endeavour. Many of his examples of beauty are drawn from the world of painting and interior design, areas which flourished at a time when commissions from the aristocracy or from royal patrons dominated the artist's portfolio.¹⁸ This itself illustrates the extent to which the world of art changed in the 1790s. By the opening years of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Hölderlin was considering the problem of how the poet can secure himself an independent bourgeois way of life. No expectation here that the demands of aristocratic taste will coincide with the creativity of the true artist.¹⁹

Kant's *Third Critique* showed how the aesthetic response could be reconciled with a rational theory of knowledge and perception, while accepting, contrary to Baumgarten, that it was not itself an activity of the pure reason.²⁰ However, while not a rational activity, the appreciation of beauty was also not wholly sensuous, as Burke's empirical theory had suggested.²¹ In the final section in this introduction, below, we

¹⁷ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p.124.

¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:229, §16, p.114.

This social pattern in itself created a problem for Kant. In §43 of the *Third Critique*, his distinction between craft and fine art obliges him to admit that, while it is clear that a smith is a tradesman or craftsman, there are problem areas, such as whether a watchmaker is rightly a craftsman or an artist. While he suggested the difference between them was one of talent, we might be tempted to see the difference as one of market niche, ie. the watchmaker produced a luxury item for those who also commissioned fine art, whereas the smith did not.

¹⁹ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Anmerkungen zum Oedipus', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.94. This essay was dated to the years 1802 -04.

²⁰ Two editions were published, in 1790 and in 1793.

²¹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

summarise Kant's arguments and some key themes that recur, sometimes in an altered form, throughout the thesis, as Schiller, Hölderlin and Friedrich Schlegel responded to him. Sometimes they barely seem to have Kant in mind when they touch on these themes, or challenge his conceptions, but they simply find themselves obligated to the *Third Critique* as the book that established the terms of their discourse, and the issues they must address.

The move to Romanticism

This thesis shows how Kant's thought acted as a philosophical starting point for the major cultural change that took place during the 1790s in German aesthetics. Our three chosen writers do not emerge as iconoclastic rebels, purposely rejecting all that had preceded them. Impressed by the work of Kant, Schiller tried to adjust Kantian theory to take into account the experience of the creative writer and the propensity of the human mind for development, education and individual variation. He remained a product of the Enlightenment, in that he believed each person could find a condition of personal balance, in which we would be optimally susceptible to the appreciation of beauty, whether it be relaxing beauty - which seems to have been an equivalent for beauty in Kant's sense - or energetic beauty - which may have been an equivalent for sublimity in Kant.²² In literature, he thought, we should continue to admire the ancients, and accept Winckelmann's characterisation of the strong, calm beauty of their artefacts, but, additionally, we should also have the confidence to produce our own, far more self-consciously constructed work, that was ultimately capable of equalling or surpassing

²² R.D. Miller, *Schiller and the ideal of freedom: a study of Schiller's philosophical works with chapters on Kant*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p.115.

Beiser believes Schiller simply never dealt with 'energetic beauty', as his project developed in other directions. See Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.149.

Hammermeister thinks Schiller was satisfied that beauty worked in two ways, and that this was important to him, but he does not comment on Schiller's incomplete analysis of the two kinds of beauty. See Hammermeister, Kai, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.53.

the work of the ancients. Once again, despite his desire to progress beyond the achievements of the classical world, he could be said to have remained largely classical in outlook, because of this belief in the perfectibility of literature, as if the late eighteenth century was capable of representing the pinnacle of human capability. His essay from 1795, *Ueber die nothwendigen Grenzen beim Gebrauch schöner Formen* (1795), in particular, warns against *Begeisterung*.²³ Enthusiasm misleads people, particularly the young, about the true extent of their talent, and leads to superficial work. They need first to learn, engage their understanding, study in depth and think about the form and content of what they are trying to create. The extent to which Schiller believes young sculptors, for example, should have studied anatomy, including dissection, carries an echo of Reynolds' classical emphasis on a very practical apprenticeship for the painter.²⁴

From Schiller we move on to consider Hölderlin. His admiration for the ancient world was possibly even greater than Schiller's; classical and mythological themes and allusions fill his poetic works. However, he also rejected the common tendency to imitate ancient writers slavishly. Not explored in this thesis, due to its strictly technical, linguistic nature, is the extent also to which he used ancient literary models to structure his own poems. His 'odes' and 'hymns' used the metre and strophal structure of, for instance, Pindar. In terms of self-consciousness, however, he believed the ancient poets had been as vividly conscious of what they were trying to achieve, and of how they were trying to achieve it, as any so-called modern writer. Most significant in Hölderlin,

²³ Friedrich Schiller, *Ueber die nothwendigen Grenzen beim Gebrauch schöner Formen* (die Horen, 1795) www.Gutenberg.spiegel.de/schiller/grformen/Druckversion_grformen.htm

One cannot help hoping that this passage was not written with the young Schlegel in mind, whose early brilliance and ambition was perhaps lost in his misguided attempts to replace philosophy with poetry, and finished works of art or scholarship with fragments and sometimes one-sided collaborations.

²⁴ Joshua Reynolds, *Seven Discourses on Art*, London: Cassell, 1901, accessed as Project Gutenberg e-text #2176, May, 2000.

however, is the near impossibility of separating the aesthetic from the epistemological or metaphysical. Schiller had introduced the idea of an internal balance in the mind of man that simultaneously used all the faculties that Kant had presented as fulfilling specialised functions. Hölderlin further integrated every aspect of human thought and action into a holistic worldview, whereby we and the world are one. The effect of this was that aesthetic experience is just one of the ways in which we find out about the reality in which we live; and the creative life is just another way of expressing and exploring this awareness, and bringing it to the attention of other people. Since all that is, is one, we and the artist are clearly faced here with an overwhelming task of comprehension and communication. Kant's notions both of the sublime and the purposiveness of nature thus have some relevance to Hölderlin's idea of what we are seeking or appreciating in an aesthetic experience. However, Hölderlin himself most often urges us towards the appreciation of beauty, of which the beauties of nature are the most powerful. Once we have read Hölderlin, the patterns of foliage on Kantian wallpaper²⁵ seem like very trivial and insignificant examples of beauty, though it is undeniable that they illustrate the beautiful oneness of the world no less, for example, than a river in full flood. Thus, Schiller challenged classicism by providing a model of mankind that was changeable and variable, even if perfectible. Hölderlin portrayed a perfectible humanity capable finally of using art to help it recognise its unity with all that exists, but made up of many more irreconcilable but harmoniously balanced elements than Schiller had considered.

If we describe these two writers in these terms, Friedrich Schlegel then undoubtedly represents the writer who moved furthest from both Kant and classicism. Even he, however, was an enthusiastic student of the classical world, and was keen to

²⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:229, §16, p.114.

find a place in the canon of literary excellence for the ancient writers whom he considered most talented. Schlegel differed from both Schiller and Hölderlin in that he doubted we would ever find any point of perfect balance. Despite his occasional references to the One and All, he was less committed to Hölderlin's conviction that the apparent contradictions of life are ultimately reconcilable, and specifically ridiculed the views of most historicist theorists who not only believed in the possibility of historical progress, but tended to believe that the present day represented the stable point towards which all past change had been tending. The personal animosity between Schiller and the Schlegel brothers, and particularly Friedrich Schlegel, should not obscure the continuities in his work, however.²⁶ He too was influenced by Kant, by Herder and by Fichte, as were Schiller and Hölderlin; and he was influenced by Schiller, Jakobi, Spinoza, Plato and Fichte, as was Hölderlin. After 1796,²⁷ he advocated fragmentation, lack of formality, richness of content, confusion, experimentation, authorial irony and even the grotesque in literature, as ways of giving life to a work and communicating liveliness to a reader. Life in the work of art, and the ongoing ability of a reader to interpret and reinterpret the work of literature as his or her life experiences change were the two key factors in aesthetic evaluation, according to Schlegel. Literary technicalities and conventions had thus come to occupy a very subsidiary instrumental rôle. These criteria are very much those Schlegel himself chose to refer to as 'Romantic', and are

²⁶ (ed.) Hans Eichner, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, zweiter Band, Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796-1801)*, München; Paderborn; Wien: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Zürich: Thomas-Verlag, 'Einleitung: Der Streit mit Schiller', p.XII.

Josef Körner, *Romantiker und Klassiker: Die Brüder Schlegel in ihren Beziehungen zu Schiller und Goethe*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971, p.33.

²⁷ A.O. Lovejoy, 'On the Meaning of „Romantic“ in Early German Romanticism, Part II', in *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 32, No 2, February 1917, p.67.

Raimond Belgardt, "'Romantische Poesie'" in Friedrich Schlegels Aufsatz Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie' in *The German Quarterly*, vol. 40, No. 2, March 1967, pp.165 - 185, however, contests the significance of this date, plausibly arguing that these were qualities in the Romance literature of the Middle Ages and early modern period that Schlegel consistently admired, even before 1796.

typical of the group of writers and thinkers known as the Early Romantics. Thus, the move from Schiller to Friedrich Schlegel also illustrates the move from Classicism to Romanticism. In our final chapter we examine some relevant extracts from Schlegel's critical work that indicate what he meant by 'Romantic'.

We can also characterise the changes we see emerging in this decade as responses to the problems arising from the pull to either fragmentation or unity. The classical world of the Enlightenment sought foundationalist unity, but offered, in the critical philosophy of Kant, an analytical approach that, while providing a comprehensive philosophical explanation for perception, morality and aesthetics, the physical sciences, religion and biology, appeared also to compartmentalise, and thus fragment, human thought. The increased and apparently excessive specialisation associated with the rapid expansion of academic research and economic diversity was already recognised in Germany as a potentially divisive social force. Schiller himself refers to this.²⁸ It is therefore not surprising that Schiller's aesthetics not only requires the participation of all the human faculties in the appreciation of art, but ascribes to art the remedial mission of creating whole, fully functioning people. In Hölderlin this drive for unity is taken further; foundationalist system, of the kind that could lead to Kantian divisions or Schillerian dichotomies, is condemned in favour of a pantheistic holism in which all aspects of human knowledge and natural reality inter-mesh and explain one another reciprocally, despite their apparent opposition.

Using a similar range of background influences, Schlegel, by contrast, emphasises the drive to fragmentation, in that he chooses to highlight contradictions, and ironical regresses, and claim them as evidence of aesthetic value. As is often the

²⁸Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.) (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982 (parallel text English / German edition),

case with Schlegel, however, his attitude towards fragmentation is ambivalent.

Foundationalism, he says, is at fault for leading to the infinite regress of knowledge and to global scepticism; furthermore, global scepticism tacitly provides its own presumption that the sceptic knows what the 'right answer' would look like. His alternative is that we should aim for piecemeal coherence, group co-operation in creative work, *Symphilosophie*, *Sympoesie*, all poetry becoming science and all science becoming art.²⁹ Thus, not only should the individual be integrated within him or herself and with the world, but individuals should be integrated among themselves, united by love and working together. Academic disciplines should be breaking down barriers, learning from one another and using one another's methods to communicate their truths to a wider public. Thus, although it is tempting to imagine the horror of the well-tempered, polite society of 1790 if confronted with the abundant confusion of 1800 Jena Romanticism, we must also admit that, despite the speed at which changes had happened, the tendency of the decade had been developmental, not revolutionary. Kantian and Fichtean methods of criticism, and Enlightenment habits of reform and improvement produced the changed attitudes and the change in aesthetics that then went on to dominate at least the creative arts during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Perhaps from this description of the differences between Classicism and Early Romanticism it may appear that this thesis accepts the view of Ernst Behler and others, that was for many years orthodox, that Romanticism was essentially a literary phenomenon, relevant only by extension to other areas of culture and philosophy.³⁰ In

²⁹ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, No 115.

Athenäums-Fragmente, No.93.

³⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, Preface, p.x.

fact there is no intention of endorsing this view, despite a focus on literature. The intention has been to look at a change in aesthetic theory, without precluding the likelihood that these changes were part of a larger, interdependent process of change. Three literary figures have been chosen only for the convenience of illustrating one thread of the changes taking place in the 1790s. Indeed, as we have already commented, while Schiller situated his aesthetic theory largely, though not entirely, within a Kantian philosophy, Hölderlin and Schlegel had philosophical positions of their own, from which, as we shall see, their aesthetic derived. With Beiser, I would emphasise the point raised above, that

They [ie. the Early German Romantics] defined the highest good not as aesthetic contemplation but as human self-realization, the development of humanity.³¹

This made art worthwhile and justified the intellectual effort of the aesthetician and the creative effort of the artist. It is an opinion shared by all three of our subjects, even though Schiller remained close to classicism in other respects. This was a distinctive feature introduced into the theory of art in the 1790s, and, looking back at the eighteenth century from our eventual endpoint in the very early 1800s, we might be inclined to conclude that, by ignoring how life as a whole involves the whole human being in the appreciation of art or literature, and vice versa, the Enlightenment values of classicism had reduced all art to the unsatisfactory level of what Kant called, so disparagingly, ‘ornament’.³²

Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy*, Albany: SUNY Press, 2007, p.7. She is clear about the extent to which an understanding of philosophy was essential to the work of the more literary members of the Early Romantic circle in Jena, and rejects Behler’s view very convincingly.

³¹ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, Preface, p.xi.

³² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:226, §14, p.110.

The search for beauty and the search for meaning

We have just noted how the writers studied in this thesis introduced changes that had direct implications for art. However, these were changes that also had wider philosophical importance. Whereas in Kant aesthetics links in with the rest of his epistemology, and particularly with his theory of perception, in Hölderlin and Schlegel we begin to approach the new discipline of hermeneutics. In *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*,³³ we see that Schiller was caught up in the same search for perfect beauty that runs through the work of, for instance, Baumgarten, Hogarth, Reynolds, Hume, Burke and Kant. Their problem had been how to establish the extent to which beauty could be an identifiable quality in an object, and also to decide how our ability to perceive this quality could be integrated into a general theory of perception; hence the association of most of these eighteenth century investigations with the epistemological rationalist / empiricist divide. By the time Schiller wrote the *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*³⁴ and *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*,³⁵ however, the mechanics, if we may so call them, of perception seemed less important. Our judgement of beauty had become, in addition, the fullest possible way of relating to the world around us. Schiller's conception of aesthetic *Schein* demands a complex double evaluation of what we are experiencing, ie. the full acceptance of a pleasing illusion that we are not tempted to claim as reality. Knowing this, the writer or artist aims to encourage this response and, if successful, convinces without deceiving. To be able to do this, he or she must take cultural expectations and experiences into

³³ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, written 25.01.1793 - 28.02.1793. Hereafter referred to in the text as the *Kallias Letters*.

³⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.) (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982. Hereafter referred to in the text as the *Aesthetic Letters*.

³⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, trans. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981. Hereafter referred to in the text as *Naïve and Sentimental*.

Introduction

account, and sometimes be prepared to challenge them. While presuming that he is giving a fuller account of aesthetic perfection and the nature of beauty, Schiller is in fact introducing an increasing number of variable factors, but he is nevertheless confident that they can eventually be balanced in a fairly regular, static and enduring world.

Hölderlin's position is different from that of Schiller, but, we shall see, could also be described as resisting that of Friedrich Schlegel. Hölderlin wanted to produce beautiful poetry. He wanted us to appreciate the beauty in nature. He used beauty as his ultimate criterion for success in art. In this he agreed with all his predecessors. Indeed, more conservatively than Schiller, he offered a 'theory of tones' to guide the poet towards the attainment of this ideal, which he also associated with a point of perfect balance. Admittedly he introduced even more variables into the equation than Schiller, but he agreed with him about the fact that they would balance. The breadth of his conception of beauty, however, differed considerably from his predecessors. In defining beauty and the task of the poet, he takes us through an entire metaphysics. It is as if Hölderlin, who had an ambivalent and obsessive relationship with philosophy,³⁶ wanted to know 'the meaning of life', and he found it in beauty. The nature of his metaphysics is such that beauty can be found in the most surprising or even distressing places, because, provided we are viewing the world in the right way, beauty is coincident with Being itself. This proviso, that we must choose the way we interpret the world, life and artistic artefacts, shifts the results of Hölderlin's aesthetics very far from any past conception that art and beauty are static, though elusive, givens. Instead, they are seen

³⁶ One illustration of this is found in a letter he wrote to his brother, 13.10.1796.

Beck, Adolf, (ed.), *Friedrich Hölderlin, Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 6, Part 1 Briefe*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1954, p.218, quoted in Dieter Henrich, 'Hölderlin in Jena' in (ed.) Eckart Förster, *The Course of Remembrance and other Essays*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1997, p.118.

as moments in an unceasing cycle of becoming, change, decay and regeneration.

Schiller could hardly have foreseen this in *Naïve and Sentimental*, when he encouraged artists to give us a fresh and slightly dissociated view of their subject matter.³⁷

In his 1795 *Studium-Aufsatz*, Friedrich Schlegel also recommended the search for and re-establishment of beauty as the chief criterion for excellence in artistic work. His theme is the decline in aesthetic standards in modern times. However, he also praises characteristics besides beauty, such as inner life, richness of content and original ways of achieving unity of structure. His later work extends the meaning of 'beauty' to encompass these and other features of art. Like Hölderlin he came to accept the very widest definition of the word, but effectively, he then substituted terms such as *poetisch, romantisch, and inneres Leben* for 'beauty'. This is what Hölderlin had been resisting. He believed in beauty, but thought we had been overlooking it. Schlegel, however, picked up ideas that had been hinted at in Schiller and which were central to Hölderlin, of fully understanding or deeply engaging with the world around us. He used these ideas in order to move away from the notion of beauty. The best literature and the best painting consist in work of which we never tire, to which we return again and again. For an artist to achieve this success, the work must have inner life, now art's main criterion for assessment, and the audience or reader must have attained a sufficient level of cultural education to be able to interpret and reinterpret the material repeatedly, in the light of their changed level of thought and life experience.

Hölderlin knew mankind was searching for meaning and truth. He warns against the less effective methods for doing this:

³⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005, p.76.

...der sentimentalische wird immer, auf einige Augenblicke, für das wirkliche Leben verstimmen.

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, (tr.) Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.67.

die Kinder führen alles zum Munde hinein, wir alles zum Verstande, und ich fange an zu glauben, daß eines so naiv ist, als das andre.³⁸

but he believed we can rightly find meaning and truth only in beauty, and further, that by recognising beauty we have found the meaning and truth of the cosmos. This is the sense in which he resisted Schlegel's conclusion that the shifting and manifold nature of so-called beauty is actually superseded by an equally shifting and irresolvable process of interpretation, re-interpretation, learning and personal development. As human beings we are looking for meaning, and that is therefore what we unavoidably and in fact look for in art.

It is to be hoped that concentrating on our chosen authors and texts will provide some useful insights into intellectual developments during the 1790s, but avoiding some common pitfalls. For instance, our discussion of Schiller, Hölderlin and Schlegel will, most importantly, establish what they said. While this may seem a superficial and obvious task, we are examining a hectic decade, during which both everyday life and the academic world was changing quickly. For Schiller, especially, this methodology has proved to be a little problematic, since, with each new publication, he set out a slightly new and somewhat elliptically expressed philosophical position. That he did so reflects the enthusiastic drive to publish, disseminate and discuss new ideas that prevailed in 1790s Germany. We have therefore not always relied solely on the letter of what these thinkers wrote, but have drawn out some of the implications of what they seem to have believed, taking some care in reconstructing their general philosophical position, and showing how it was compatible with their aesthetic theory. We have also cross-referenced among the writers themselves, and pointed out plausible links between

³⁸Friedrich Hölderlin, 'II. Vorstufen und späte Fragmente: Entwürfe zur endgültigen Fassung', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.196.

Children put everything into their mouths, we [put everything] into our understanding, and I am beginning to believe that the one is just as naïve as the other.

their ways of thinking and those of Kant, in order to supply some cultural context for their work, and create some impression of the influences and mindset of the period. The comments made in our conclusion suggest affinities between developments in aesthetics during the 1790s, and nineteenth and twentieth century hermeneutics, literary criticism and art theory, and have, as far as possible, been drawn from our material, rather than being read into these eighteenth century works as a result of some prior preconception.³⁹ That I feel it necessary to make these preliminary comments itself demonstrates the extent to which I have implicitly accepted and applied the lessons that I hope will be learned from all three writers in the course of reading this thesis. Progressively they introduced the idea that there is an element of cultural determination in aesthetics, and sought to achieve some balance between the social and universal factors that they believed attend all aesthetic judgements.

At the end of this study we suggest that their opinions supported or encouraged the hermeneutical approach that grew from the contemporary German culture of philology and biblical exegesis. Hermeneutics became one of the enduring strands of German and continental philosophy. Therefore, it appears that, in witnessing the shift exemplified in the aesthetic writings of our three chosen writers, the shift from attempting to define beauty and towards a search for meaning, we observe the most significant and influential change that followed on the aesthetics of Kant's *Third Critique*.

³⁹ Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas', in (ed.) James Tully, *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his critics*, Cambridge; Oxford: Polity Press Blackwell, 1988, pp.30, 32.

KANT'S PHILOSOPHY AND THE *CRITIQUE OF THE POWER OF JUDGEMENT*

The aesthetics of Schiller, Hölderlin and Friedrich Schlegel primarily built on and developed aspects of Kant's *Third Critique*. However, in common with most of their contemporaries, they were also familiar with Kant's other works, some of whose key ideas were widely accepted. In particular, we shall see this in our chapters on Schiller. *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, his first serious attempt to engage with Kant's aesthetic theory, uses the theory of perception presented by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. His next work, *Anmut und Würde*, the first he published on aesthetics, adapts Kant's moral theory, from the *Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Morals* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*.¹

These works constituted the main corpus of the 'critical philosophy', the term used at the time to refer to Kantianism and its successors. The *First Critique* set out the necessary conditions that make objective knowledge possible. These conditions, although applied to empirical data, are not empirical or acquired through experience; they are 'transcendental' – independent of experience. In the *Groundwork* and the *Second Critique* Kant identified comparable conditions in relation to practical activity, specifically morality, and the *Third Critique* did the same for aesthetics and nature. The *Third Critique* reflected increasing public interest in aesthetics and biological research, and also completed Kant's metaphysical system. By metaphysical, Kant meant that, while not justifiable by reference to experience, his position nevertheless provided a consistent and reliable way of structuring and justifying our

¹ These two works are included in: Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, (ed.), trans., Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. They are referred to hereafter as the *Groundwork* and the *Second Critique*. The *Groundwork* was published in 1785, the *Second Critique* in 1788.

judgements.² This chapter will summarise these works, indicating some ways in which they were interdependent.

The *First Critique: A Critique of Pure Reason*

We need to summarise the basic ideas in the *First Critique* as a starting point for understanding the extent to which Schiller, Hölderlin and Schlegel expected aesthetic judgements to resemble or differ from other types of knowledge. Kant identified two kinds of judgement: those made *a posteriori*, or 'after the fact' on the basis of empirical experience, and those made *a priori*, independently of experience. In order to be considered *a priori*, a judgement must be thought as being both universal and necessary, which is to say it must be impossible to conceive differently, and must be held to be always and everywhere the case. Kant also distinguished between synthetic and analytic judgements.³ All *a posteriori* judgements are synthetic, in that the predicate of any proposition that expresses an empirical judgement is external to the subject, and is known to be true only because we have experience of an association between this subject and predicate.

Some *a priori* judgements are analytic, others are synthetic. Analytic *a priori* judgements are expressed using propositions in which the idea of the predicate is contained within the subject, thus making them true by definition, and all analytic judgements are of this kind. Synthetic *a priori* judgements are those which are necessary and universal, while also expressing knowledge of the world. They are judgements about experience that do not rely only on experience as in, for example, the proposition, 'Each change has a cause'. By definition the notion of a cause

²Immanuel Kant, *A Critique of Pure Reason*, (ed.) trans. F. Max Müller, Garden City NY: Anchor Doubleday, 1966, Aviii, p.xxiii.

³ *ibid.*, A7/B11, pp.7-12.

presupposes the notion of an effect.⁴ This constitutes necessity. Furthermore, the principle of causality is applied universally, making connections among completely separate events or objects, independently of the way they are defined or of their intrinsic structure. Causality thus exemplifies a form of reasoning about the world that has objective validity and does not depend entirely on subjective empirical experience. This further means that we do not simply have or accumulate experiences. Independently of experience, we possess concepts with which to organise it; in other words, by the application of which we gain knowledge.

Our minds thus form experiences from the raw material – or manifold of perception - that our 'sensibility', the capacity to be affected by external objects, derives from our sensory encounters with the physical world. We order our sensations, gain intuitions and form representations of what Kant calls an 'appearance' - the external world as it presents itself to the sensibility. From these intuitions our minds then form concepts that can be applied to representations so that we can refer to objects. All appearances have content and form.⁵ The content, or matter, of perceived appearance is given to us *a posteriori*, but the ability to form a representation is present *a priori* in our mind, in our pure sensibility, and thus does not originate in sensation. The pure intuitions of space and time enable us to represent objects to our mind. Space must always be presupposed whenever we think of objects, that is, extended bodies that occupy space; and time is a necessary condition of our even thinking of any object, since we can only experience our intuitions and organise our experiences either simultaneously or sequentially.⁶

⁴ *ibid.*, B5, p.4.

⁵ *ibid.*, A18/B32, p.21.

⁶ *ibid.* A33/B49, pp.23-31.

Our intuition of space is not derived from experience, since it is a prerequisite for the formation of experience. Time is the *a priori* precondition of even the possibility of our mind's having any representations of things as existing, or of our being able to say the mind exists. Both are therefore pure intuitions belonging to the perceiving subject's own mind, a sign that we have some kind of receptivity in virtue of which we intuit any particular objects. Yet space and time also have empirical reality, because we can think of or experience objects only in time and space. Their application gives our outer experiences objective reality. However, this objective knowledge concerns the way things appear to us. It is knowledge of appearances, or phenomena.⁷

Things 'in themselves', or noumena, cannot be known.⁸ Kant's philosophy thus centres on the structure of subjectivity that makes it possible for thinking or perceiving subjects to synthesise matter drawn from the manifold of perception with the forms of time and space. Kant did not intend us to question whether appearances falsely led us to believe external things existed, only to recognise that we knew them as appearances. Since the forms of space and time are also appearances that 'appear' and operate within our own sensibility, an appearance is nothing deceptive or illusory.

Humans do not acquire empirical knowledge, however, until the understanding has also fulfilled its rôle. 'Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.'⁹ Standing alone, the senses and sensibility cannot think or conceptualise, and similarly, without the senses first giving us the raw material of the manifold of experience, the understanding would have no content to think about and could not make judgements. The understanding applies the concepts

⁷ *ibid.*, A18/B32, p.22.

⁸ *ibid.*, A30/B45, p.28.

⁹ *ibid.*, A51/B75, p.45.

acquired from experience and also the *a priori* categories to the representations received from the sensibility, and according to the rules of thinking – which Kant terms 'pure general logic' – it connects different representations to one another and sets out the criteria of truth. These are not universal truth criteria for the sense content of a representation, but the formal framework of logic within which representations can be combined or sequenced. The mind can also reflect on the nature, scope and validity of the rules used by the understanding. Kant calls this, 'transcendental knowledge'. Thus, we can study the concepts present in our understanding, independently of any representations of appearances.

The sensibility passively receives sensations, and involuntarily applies concepts to the manifold, synthesising it and forming intuitions, but the understanding is active and spontaneous. It unites many individual representations together under one concept, and orders relationships among the concepts it has already applied, thus unifying concepts in a 'higher representation'.¹⁰ Regardless of the content of the representations it orders, the understanding judges in four ways, according to quantity (unity, plurality, totality), quality (reality, negation, limitation), relations (substance, causality, community) and modality (possibility, existence, necessity). The understanding applies these *a priori* rules or categories to synthesise both the intuitions presented by the sensibility and also concepts. This is how both empirical and *a priori* knowledge are constituted. For instance, if we are to perceive objects from among the undifferentiated flow of the manifold of perception, we must be able to judge whether objects are one or many, whether they stand in a causal relationship to one another, whether they are real or not and what is necessary to their existence.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, A70/B94, p.56.

To guarantee the objectivity of knowledge gained from subjective empirical experiences, the application to representations of the *a priori* conditions found in the understanding must be justifiable independently of experience. Thus, firstly, the formation of our particular representations presupposes the ability to think of an object in general. We cannot otherwise think of any object of experience. From this Kant claims that, 'The objective validity of the categories, as being such concepts *a priori*, rests on this very fact that by them alone, so far as the form of thought is concerned, experience becomes possible,'¹¹ a fact which, as Kant says, illustrates, though it does not prove, their objective validity.¹²

Kant's proof of their validity refers back to the way we combine representations into another higher representation. In such acts of synthesis, we can only combine representations that we ourselves have already combined; combination (or connection) itself, however, is the only representation we can have which has not been given by objects.¹³ The act of synthesis is thus not empirical in origin, and must be *a priori*. Since synthesis is a spontaneous act, this further means it must be the action of an agent of some kind, not a passive operation of the sensibility. Kant identifies this agent as the thinking subject. Synthesis is a 'self-activity of the subject'. Not only does the subject combine representations into higher representations, but it is defined by its ability to do so.¹⁴

Furthermore, combination itself presupposes the possibility of higher order representations, which indicates that the way the manifold of experience is combined prior to conceptualisation or the application of the categories cannot itself be derived

¹¹ *ibid.*, A93/B126, p.73.

¹² *ibid.*, A94/B126, p.73

¹³ *ibid.*, B130, p.76.

¹⁴ *ibid.* B131, p.77.

from experience. Ultimately, the unity which is added to and unifies our representations is the unity of the thinking subject, the necessary precondition of all representations, without which it is impossible to ascribe any of 'my' representations to 'me'. Yet this subject itself is not learned of empirically, since it is the essential precondition of any experience at all. Kant calls it 'pure self-consciousness'.¹⁵ It generates the unified representation, 'I think', but is not itself a representation. It is not an individuated person, but rather the structure that makes it possible for us even to think of the existence of individual persons.¹⁶ The transcendental subject is the precondition and source of all *a priori* knowledge, and, being itself a unity, makes it possible for us to unify the *a priori* forms of experience (i.e. the pure intuitions of time and space that form our empirical intuitions) and the pure concepts of the understanding (i.e. the categories that order and combine our representations). Every element in our response to empirical experience is thus unified in the transcendental subject. Therefore, transcendental self-consciousness guarantees the objectivity of our knowledge, because it is the precondition of the possibility of all knowledge of experience. Kant's *First Critique* thus not only provides us with an account of how humanity experiences and perceives the world, but gives rational grounds for accepting that we can trust the human interpretation of the world. Although we ourselves order and form our perceptions, we thereby form objective knowledge in accordance with *a priori* principles.

The epistemology of the *Third Critique* was fundamental for the thinkers whom we go on to study in this thesis. For instance, we shall see in the *Kallias Letters* how Kant's claim that we gain objective knowledge through the application of

¹⁵ *ibid.*, B132, B135, pp.78, 79.

¹⁶ Peter Sedgwick, *Descartes to Derrida*, Oxford UK; Malden MA: Blackwell, 2001, p.44.

concepts to our empirical experience limited Schiller's options as he tried to argue the case for an objective aesthetics, and we later see how the *Aesthetic Letters* introduced its revised aesthetic theory by reference, though in a different terminology, to the transcendental subjectivity that is presupposed in the existence and activity of any individual subject or person. Hölderlin, however, diverges from Kant's account in his explanation of the way time enables experience, and in his claims that some knowledge of reality is not structured by subjectivity and often does not rely on conceptualisation.

The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals and the Second Critique: A Critique of Practical Reason

The *Second Critique* and the *Groundwork* establish the extent to which moral obligation and freedom rest on *a priori* principles of reason.¹⁷ In empirical knowledge, reason applies itself to something given from some source other than itself. However, reason guides us to make choices based on the moral law that it makes for itself, and we thereby make the moral law real. In this sense, then, reason makes its own objects. Kant is not attempting to deduce actual moral guidelines from these principles, since the *a priori* conditions that make morality possible should be free of references to contingent human nature or moral codes.¹⁸

Kant identifies practical reason with the will in that practical reason moves the will by means of the moral imperative, but also distinguishes between them, in that the will is a rational power rather than a blind drive.¹⁹ The good will is good without reference to any other end or likely consequences, such as happiness, and is thus

¹⁷ Peter Sedgwick, 'Kant, Immanuel (1724-1804)', in Andrew Edgar & Peter Sedgwick, *Cultural Theory: The Key Thinkers*, London: Routledge, 2002, p.100.

¹⁸ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, vol. VI, Wolff to Kant*, London: Burns and Oates, 1964, p.314.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.310.

intrinsically good in itself, since, for instance, I can will to do good, even if prevented in some way from doing so.²⁰ To be good, a will must will from duty, not simply conforming to duty, but willing for the sake of duty. The idea of duty itself suggests we must sometimes overcome obstacles within ourselves, or external pressures. If we already feel inclined to behave in a way that conforms with duty, and do so only because it suits our inclination, our action has no particular moral value. Only if, for the sake of fulfilling our moral obligations, we continue to conform with duty, even when our inclination has faded, do we demonstrate the working of a good will. However, it is not through our submission to the law that we ascribe dignity and sublimity to the person who fulfils all his duties, but because of the extent to which he also makes that law.²¹

Kant defines duty thus: 'Duty is the necessity of acting out of reverence for the law'.²² For Kant the main characteristic of natural and moral law is that it is universal, without exceptions. We unconsciously and necessarily conform to natural laws, but it is as rational beings that we can conform to the idea of law. To make moral decisions, we tend to act on maxims - subjective principles of volition that guide what we do.²³ Kant says that to have moral worth our maxims must conform to law in general, and be capable of being universalised without exception, according to the idea of law.²⁴ This idea of law, expressed as the Categorical Imperative, then commands our obedience, and is fulfilled by the good will when we do our duty. The obedience of our will is not a matter of necessary determination, although the will should and can

²⁰ *Groundwork*, 4:393, 4:394, pp.49, 50.

²¹ *ibid.*, 4:440, p.88.

²² *ibid.*, 4:400, p.55.

²³ *Second Critique*, 5:20, p.154.

²⁴ *Groundwork*, 4:402, p.57.

obey.²⁵ Thus, the pure practical reason commands, and our duty is to overcome any conflicting desires, and obey.²⁶ At least two formulations of the Categorical Imperative are given, 'Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law,' and, 'Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a Universal Law of Nature'.²⁷ The Categorical Imperative is distinguished from hypothetical imperatives, which may or may not be moral but which are characterised in terms of their commanding a course of action in order to achieve a given end. On Kant's view no hypothetical imperative, not even the hedonic pursuit of happiness or Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, can act as the supreme principle of morality, since all such imperatives are justified by reference to human nature, desirability or some other end. Only the categorical imperative 'declares an action to be objectively necessary in itself, without reference to any purpose, that is, without any end'.²⁸

Kant postulates that mankind (indeed any rational being) is an end in itself, and therefore also formulates the Categorical Imperative as, 'So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only'.²⁹ All imperatives conditioned by desire, inclination or interest are hypothetical imperatives. Only the Categorical Imperative is unconditioned. The good will that obeys the Categorical Imperative also acts independently of interest or inclination, and thus too is unconditioned and autonomous, acting for itself, and so too, capable of legislating for itself,

²⁵ *ibid.*, 4:413, p.66.

²⁶ Frederick Copleston, *op.cit.*, p.321.

²⁷ *Groundwork*, 4:421, p.73.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 4:415, p.68.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 4:429, p.80.

unconstrained by external influences. Thus, the will can 'regard itself at the same time as making universal law through its own maxim'.³⁰ Even obeying the will of God or the commands of religion first requires our good will to recognise that obedience to God is a duty.³¹

If mankind were only an autonomous, rational will, it would be superfluous for practical reason to make the moral law and command us to obey the Categorical Imperative. Only because mankind is also an animal creature, subject to desires, inclinations and the laws of nature does the will make the moral law that physical humanity ought to obey.³² The Categorical Imperative is a synthetic *a priori* proposition. It cannot be discovered by analysing the rational will, and is therefore not analytic; but it is unconditioned and necessarily obliges obedience from the will. The notion of obedience always suggests we have the option of choosing not to obey, despite the necessity of the Categorical Imperative. This therefore leads Kant to say that practical reason or the will of a rational being 'must regard itself as free; that is, the will of such a being cannot be a will of its own except under the idea of freedom'.³³ The idea of freedom is thus practically necessary and is a necessary condition of morality. The will thus has a rôle analogous to that of causality.³⁴ Naturally, however, it differs from causality, because it is not directed towards extending our empirical knowledge of the external world, but towards the performance of certain kinds of action. The moral law thus stands in the same relation to rational beings as causal laws to the natural world.

³⁰ *Second Critique*, 5:30, p.164.

³¹ Frederick Copleston, *op.cit.*, p.330.

³² *ibid.*, p.331. Copleston discerns the influence on Kant of Rousseau's contrast between the general and private wills in this distinction.

³³ *Groundwork*, 5:448, p.96.

³⁴ *ibid.*, 4:446, p.94.

One should note here that Kant refers to the 'idea' of freedom. He says that we cannot 'prove' freedom. Freedom is an idea of reason, a matter of the noumenal sphere, into which we have no intuitive insight, rather than of the phenomenal sphere with which we become acquainted in empirical knowledge. Any attempt to prove freedom would bring us up against the limitations of mankind's theoretical knowledge. However, equally it cannot be shown that freedom is impossible, and, in addition, the moral law requires us to assume it. This helps explain why it is by obeying the moral law, rather than simply by exercising a choice about whether or not to obey, that we demonstrate our freedom. As in Kant's claim that it is only if I feel disinclined to exercise a good will, and yet do so nevertheless, that I demonstrate my good will, an otherwise unknowable moral principle becomes practically manifest. Only in its practical application do we have evidence either that a person is conforming to the moral law, or that he or she can be free.

Kant then must reconcile the difficulty that all our actions, whether internal or external, are subject to the conditions of time and space. This means moral actions are determined in the empirical world, but also free. His solution is to point out that we are aware of ourselves both as part of mechanical nature and as a thing in itself. We think we are determinable only through self-given laws, and thus that we are free.³⁵ The working of conscience illustrates this. In terms of their determining causal factors and external constraints, past misdemeanours have ceased to be. Yet my conscience refuses to recognise that these events are past and still feels guilty. This indicates that the noumenal, transcendental self is outside time. Actions belong to that self, regardless of the time-scale within which they occurred.³⁶

³⁵ *Second Critique*, 5:97, p.218.

³⁶ Frederick Copleston, *op.cit.*, p.336.

Kant also has a conception of the *summum bonum*, towards which the Categorical Imperative will lead us. Although the limits of human understanding prevent us from knowing exactly what the ultimate good for mankind consists in, since it is a supersensible object of the practical reason, by obeying the categorical imperative and doing our duty we ultimately achieve both virtue and true happiness. Although we cannot be moral simply by aping virtue or by seeking happiness, the moral law commands us to make ourselves worthy of happiness, the totality of which may include a world beyond our present, sensible world. The *summum bonum*, Kant says, requires the agency of a God who both desires that his creatures should be happy and has the power to confer happiness on them. Thus, through religion, as an indirect consequence of applying the *a priori* principle of the Categorical Imperative, mankind has a hope of happiness.³⁷

In our discussion of Schiller's essay, *Anmut und Würde* below, we shall see that he seems to have interpreted the argument of the *Groundwork* and the *Second Critique* not as a search for the *a priori* principles of moral reasoning, but as the foundation for a rigid, joyless and rather inhumane moral code. Schiller emphasises Kant's suggestion that the rational will subordinates inclination through the Categorical Imperative, an interpretation that he counters with his demonstration that duty and inclination create a moral aesthetic when brought into agreement with each other.

The *Third Critique: A Critique of the Power of Judgement*

Kant's *Third Critique* conducts an exercise similar to that carried out in the first two *Critiques*. It sets out the rational principles for our judgements of aesthetic taste in the sphere of the beautiful and the sublime in art and nature, and also for the

³⁷ *Second Critique*, 5:130, p.244.

judgements whereby we ascribe purpose to organic nature. Kant believed these two kinds of judgement were closely related. In aesthetics our judgements of the beautiful and the sublime are subjective matters of personal taste, and yet we expect that other people should also assent to them. As he had done before, Kant reconciled this apparent anomaly by reference to the synthetic *a priori*. In the world of organic nature Kant recognised that mechanistic processes were at work, and that mankind was subject to them in just the same way as any other natural object. He acknowledged also, however, that human reason, in recognising humanity as an end in itself, obliges us to think of nature, too, as a system of means and purposes.³⁸

The *Third Critique* also brought together the conclusions reached in the *First* and *Second Critiques*.³⁹ The *First Critique* set out the conditions under which we perceive and accept the nature of natural phenomena as they are, according to the rules governing our understanding. The *Second Critique* set out the conditions of human freedom that enable us to act upon the world around us through our moral choices. They showed that the theoretically necessary principles that apply to phenomena are compatible with the practically necessary principles that refer to noumena. The *Third Critique* discusses the extent to which the laws of nature, discovered by means of the mind's *a priori* structures, apparently harmonise with the possibility that nature can be affected by the free moral activities of mankind.⁴⁰ Thus pure theoretical reason and pure practical reason are actually one, although applied differently.

³⁸ *Third Critique*, §§82, 83, 84, 5:425-5:436, pp.293-303.

³⁹ See especially *ibid.*, §§59, 5:351-5:354, pp.225-228; §§76-78, 5:401-415, pp.271-284.

§59 is discussed below, but §§76 - 79 are less relevant to the aesthetic concerns of this thesis.

⁴⁰ Lewis White Beck, *Kant: Selections*, New York: Macmillan, 1988, p.331.

Reason recognises that nature seems explicable not only by the so-called causal laws of nature, as identified by our understanding, but to at least some extent too by analogy and by reference to purpose. For instance, we are able to classify organic forms into genera and species. In theory, nature might have been too complicated for us to identify any useful explanatory patterns in its make up. In practice, it seems almost to have been designed so that minds like ours could comprehend it.⁴¹ Kant called nature's apparent amenability to being interpreted in terms of teleological purpose, 'the formal purposiveness of nature'.

In biology for instance, nature could be investigated both through mechanistic causal laws and by thinking of ends and purposes or drawing upon analogy. For instance, the heart can be understood both mechanically, as a pump, an explanation that itself makes an analogy between a humanly manufactured machine and a living organ, and as having the purpose of moving blood around the body, or, more generally, of sustaining the life of an organism.

Like the rest of natural creation we are governed by natural mechanisms. However, unlike the rest of nature we have reason, itself a gift of nature whereby we identify higher ends and purposes. The aesthetic aspects of the *Third Critique* thus arise, not as the main purpose of Kant's argument, but in the course of his attempt to reconcile nature and freedom. Our creative activity in the arts and sciences can be seen as a way in which our own nature prepares us as humans for overcoming our animal nature.⁴² We can thereby achieve the uniquely human, superior condition in which we become dominated by our reason, and thus free and rational - able to obey the moral law.

⁴¹ *Third Critique*, Introduction, V, 5:184, p.71.

⁴² *ibid.*, §§82-84, 5:425-5:436, pp.293-303.

To explain how understanding, by means of which we come to know the natural law, and the practical reason, that gives us moral law, form a single system, Kant introduces a third cognitive faculty of the mind, the faculty of judgement, that may also possess its own *a priori* principles. He notes that, besides the cognitive faculties, there are also three general mental faculties, namely, cognition, desire and feeling. Cognition and the understanding relate to each other, practical reason relates to desire, and Kant suggests that the faculty of judgement relates to the feelings of pleasure and pain, thus possibly giving feeling its own *a priori* principles.⁴³

Judgement in general is the ability to relate universals to particulars. In reflective judgement thought moves from a given particular to discover the universal, or law, under which it can be subsumed. Kant contrasts the reflective judgement with the determinant judgement, whereby a given universal is applied to a particular, as explained in the *First Critique*.⁴⁴ Although the understanding applies concepts, it cannot justify our ability to group varied empirical scientific data together and discover universal laws. This is what happens when we make a reflective judgement. The apparent purposiveness of nature is thus an *a priori* regulative idea. We do not and cannot know that nature genuinely has purpose, but our assumption that it does seems to be successful in making its operations intelligible to us, leading to new scientific discoveries.⁴⁵

Kant then analyses the nature of pleasurable experiences, and distinguishes between the judgement of the agreeable and the judgement of taste. Judgements of the agreeable are subjective, as when objects only seem to be pleasant, because they meet

⁴³ *ibid.*, Introduction, III, 5:176-5:179, pp.64-68.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, Introduction, IV, 5:179-5:181, pp.66-68.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, Introduction, V, 5:181-5:186, pp.68-73.

some personal need, desire or preference.⁴⁶ In aesthetics, specifically, we gain pleasure from simply perceiving a natural object or a work of art that seems somehow to fit or suit our perceptual abilities. This form of pleasure is expressed in an aesthetic judgement of taste.⁴⁷ Anyone making a judgement of taste expects that there should be universal assent to their judgement.⁴⁸ This distinction parallels the difference between our merely subjective judgements of perception, when we claim that something 'seems' to be so, and the objective knowledge we hold once the understanding has applied a concept to a representation.

The main difference between the pleasure gained from beauty and the pleasure of gratifying the senses is the presence or absence of interest. Judging an object as beautiful gives a disinterested pleasure. Since doing so does not engage subjective, personal preferences, it can claim to be a universally valid judgement. This is what qualifies it to be a judgement of taste.⁴⁹ Furthermore, objects that are judged to be beautiful are perceived to be purposive, as if they have a purpose, or been designed by an artist, even though they do not serve any particular purpose. They have 'purposiveness without purpose': 'beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it without representation of an end.'⁵⁰

In a simplification of the theory of perception in the *First Critique*, Kant says this pleasure is created by the harmonious free play between our imagination and understanding. The word, 'imagination', is a kind of shorthand for the cluster of activities that the *First Critique* analyses as sensing and forming our sensible

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, §§1-5, 5:203-5:211, pp.89-96.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, Introduction, VI, 5:186-5:188, pp.73-75.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, §6, 5:211, p.96.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, §§6-9, 5:211-5:219, pp.96-104.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, §17, 5:236, p.120.

intuitions. It thus covers the sensibility and the formative activity that organises the manifold of perception into intuitions that can be represented to the understanding. The object pleases us by being so well adapted to the free play of our cognitive faculties that it is perceived as if it had been designed to promote this mental activity.⁵¹ Since these cognitive faculties make it possible for human beings to communicate among themselves and share knowledge, Kant refers to them collectively as the *sensus communis*. All human beings should therefore agree when making a judgement of taste. The satisfaction we feel is a necessary pleasure that should also be felt necessarily by anyone else who perceives the same object.⁵² If this does not always happen, it is because we so rarely make a truly pure judgement of taste. Other factors often interfere with the operation of the pure *a priori* conditions of the judgement of taste.⁵³

To clarify his account of aesthetic judgements of taste Kant also compares judgements of taste with empirical judgements. Although there is a parallel between the universality of claims to knowledge and aesthetic judgements, the judgement of taste is not a claim to objective knowledge. In the aesthetic judgement of taste the understanding does not apply its concepts. In fact, it withholds its concepts so that the mind as a whole can enjoy the free play between the imagination and understanding. According to the *First Critique*, it is through the application of concepts to these representations that the understanding forms objective knowledge. Thus, by definition, the aesthetic judgement, whereby we come to call an object beautiful, although claiming to be universal, cannot be objective.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, §§10-17, 5:220-5:236, pp.105-120.

⁵² *ibid.*, §§18-22, 5:236-5:244, pp.121-127.

⁵³ *ibid.*, and also §§36-38, 5:289-5:291, pp.168-171.

From our mind's failure to apply concepts three conclusions follow. Firstly, judgements of beauty are unlike judgements of agreeableness, in which concepts tend to set functional ends for objects, and determine how they will benefit and affect specific individuals in their own subjective, contingent circumstances.⁵⁴ Secondly, beautiful things can be regarded disinterestedly. Once we apply concepts, we become distracted by many material features of the object's content that tell us, for example, whether we can obtain personal advantage or sensuous pleasure from its exploitation or enjoyment; we also discover whether or not it even exists in reality, and can then form opinions about its existence, and we cease to be disinterested.⁵⁵ Thirdly, we are able to enjoy the free beauty of the object. In applying a concept to an object, we set its limits and assign function to it. We then unavoidably judge whether or not it is good of its kind. This Kant calls, 'adherent beauty', an inferior form of beauty, which can be related to technical perfection, but not to the pleasure that derives from the free interplay of our unrestrained cognitive faculties that constitutes free beauty.⁵⁶ Beauty is discerned in things without reference to their content. Thus the distinction between form and content, or matter, that Kant makes in the *First Critique* gains significance here also. Everyone perceives the form, but the content is 'private to each'.⁵⁷ This supports Kant's claim that the aesthetic judgement is universal.

Kant then moves on to discuss the notion of the sublime, which he regarded as constituting all the remaining cases covered by aesthetic judgements of taste. The relationship between beauty and sublimity is that 'the beautiful seems to be taken as the presentation of an indeterminate concept of the understanding, but the sublime as

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, §5, 5:210, p.95.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, §§2, 3, 5:205, 5:206, pp.90, 91.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, §16, 5:229, 5:230, p.114.

⁵⁷ S. Körner, *Kant*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, p.184.

that of a similar concept of reason.⁵⁸ Beautiful objects give pleasure in perception because their form immediately pleases our cognitive faculties. Sublime things, usually natural objects, overwhelm our cognitive abilities by either their size or power. In this case, the mind seems to lack any adequate concept that it could apply to the object in question. The sublime is therefore also an example of disinterested perception. Such objects threaten our powers of understanding and possibly also our personal wellbeing. As a superior rational being, however, a human being can overcome his sense that the object poses a threat, and experience a pleasurable awe. As with beauty, the response of the human mind to the object is in fact what constitutes sublimity, but we tend to transfer that characteristic to the object, and call the object, rather than the mind or its response, 'sublime'.⁵⁹

It is in the fine arts rather than the merely pleasing arts that we make a judgement of taste. Our experience of objects of fine art is like an experience of natural beauty, but the beautiful artefact is produced through the workings of genius, a natural gift possessed by some people that is capable of both creating something original and giving the rule to art. Even this gift, however, must still be subject to the judgement of taste, or it risks producing 'original nonsense'.⁶⁰ The artist's genius often manifests itself in a work of art as 'spirit', and Kant's examples show how spirit influences our judgement that something is beautiful. '[I]n an aesthetic significance, [spirit] means the animating principle in the mind.' It enlivens our mind by choosing material that 'purposively sets the mental powers in motion, i.e., into a play that is self-maintaining...'⁶¹ Furthermore, spirit is 'the faculty for the presentation of aesthetic

⁵⁸ *Third Critique*, §23, 5:244, p.128.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, §23, 5:245, p.129.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, §§46-48, 5:307-5:313, pp.186-191.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, §49, 5:313, pp.191,192.

ideas'.⁶² An aesthetic idea is 'that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it.' In this, it is a 'counterpart' to ideas of reason, i.e., concepts to which no intuition representable by the imagination can be adequate. This, then, is how the imagination, as a productive cognitive faculty, is 'very powerful in creating, as it were, another nature out of the material which the real one gives it.' Another of Kant's scarce, and therefore famous examples follows, as Jupiter's eagle, with lightning in its claws, and Juno's peacock are cited as yielding aesthetic ideas that represent certain aesthetic attributes, namely, the power of the king of heaven and the splendour of its queen.⁶³ Genius in art can then be summed up as the union of imagination and understanding not, as when we acquire empirical knowledge, through the subordination of the imagination to the concepts of the understanding, but in a relationship in which the imagination is free, and able 'to express what is unnameable... and to make it universally communicable...without the constraint of rules'.⁶⁴ If we add to this Kant's comment that 'genius really consists in the happy relation, which no science can teach and no diligence learn...',⁶⁵ the analysis of aesthetic appreciation and artistic creativity in this part of the *Third Critique* may seem slightly vague. However, other thinkers found them useful, as later chapters of this thesis will show.

Continuing the task of integrating the *Third Critique* with his previously published thought, Kant discerns an affinity between the aesthetic, especially in our recognition of sublimity, and the moral. Beauty is the symbol of the morally good.

⁶² *ibid.*, §49, 5:314, p.192.

⁶³ *ibid.*, §49, 5:315, p.193.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, §49, 5:317, p.195.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, §49, 5:317, p.194.

For Kant, a symbol is the way in which concepts that can be thought, but which have no adequate sensible intuitions, are ascribed intuitions that the power of judgement treats, not in terms of their content, but formally, drawing out the forms of the reflection that correspond to the concepts, 'as mere expressions of concepts'.⁶⁶ Thus, just as beauty pleases us immediately as a sensuous intuition, morality gives us pleasure in its very concept. More obviously the two are comparable in that both please us without any interest. Thirdly, both demonstrate freedom, beauty in the free agreement of the imagination and understanding, morality in the free agreement of the will with the universal law of reason. Finally, the subjective principle for judging the presence of beauty is represented as being universal, valid for everyone, though not knowable by any universal concept. Analogous to this is the universal moral law, valid for everyone, but knowable by means of a universal concept.⁶⁷ The parallels that can be drawn among the various ways in which our conceptual, moral and aesthetic thinking works suggest that morals and taste depend on a common noumenal condition. Being supersensible, any such condition is unknowable, but our faculty of judgement provides us with a way of reconciling all these strands that satisfies the human mind.

The second half of the *Third Critique* deals with teleological judgement. Although its content is less directly relevant to our discussions of aesthetics, the debate affected the way Kant's contemporaries regarded biological investigations and nature in general. It is also the source of the notion of intellectual intuition, used by Friedrich Hölderlin and others. Kant tells us that the reflective judgement also makes judgements about objects by reference to their teleological purpose. He here seeks to

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, §59, 5:351, 5:352, pp.225, 226.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, §59, 5:354, pp.227, 228.

demonstrate how we can be justified in using both mechanistic, causal explanations, established in the *First Critique* as one of our main kinds of objective knowledge, and also teleological explanations.⁶⁸ In doing so, Kant aims to reconcile the causal necessities explained in the *First Critique* with the freedom asserted in the *Second Critique* and the *Groundwork*. Kant distinguishes between the things humans have made for their own identifiable purposes, and organisms. He calls organisms 'natural purposes', characterised by the fact that they reproduce, grow, repair themselves and are made up of mutually dependent parts. In living things, each part is reciprocally means and end for the other parts of the same whole, and parts are understood with reference to their functioning within the whole.⁶⁹ Regarding a methodology for the biological sciences, Kant says we feel obliged to search for mechanical explanations for the way organs and organisms work, and are not satisfied until we have done so. However, our motivation for pursuing this investigation is unavoidably guided by our interest in the teleology of the organism. The two kinds of explanation are complementary.⁷⁰ Whereas causality extends human knowledge by building up increasingly generalised explanations on the basis of partial discoveries, teleological explanations refer to the concept of the whole as a determining factor in the nature of the parts under investigation, i.e. their function. Effectively, then, our presupposition that parts have a purpose within the organic whole arises because of the unavoidable limitations of human cognition. If we were a hypothetical kind of creature who did not need to apply concepts to sensation in order to obtain knowledge, then our

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, §70, 5:386-5:388, pp.258-260.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, §§64 -66, 5:370-5:377, pp.242-249.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, §§71, 75, 5:388-5:400, pp.260-271.

intellects would be able to intuit the existence and nature of objects immediately, simply through thought, or intellectual intuition.⁷¹

Thus, the principle of the harmony between nature and our mental capacities works 'as if an understanding (though not ours) had given them for our faculties of cognition, in order to make possible a system of experience in accordance with special laws of nature',⁷² and is thus 'a principle of looking for laws, although merely a subjective one.'⁷³ It is a heuristic principle that makes it possible for mankind to engage in any kind of scientific investigation. This, as we shall see, was the rather cautious and qualified claim that Hölderlin wished to show was knowable as a definite truth.

This overview of Kant's work has introduced Kantian terms and ideas that will reappear through the rest of the thesis, though rarely supported explicitly by the kinds of argument that Kant employed to justify their introduction. This indication of how Kant intended them to fit together, however, should enable the reader to follow their subsequent history, and see how they were sometimes presumed, sometimes used, and sometimes modified in the course of the 1790s by Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Schlegel.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, §77, 5:406, p.275.

Lewis White Beck, *op. cit.*, p.339. Beck tells us that this is the kind of nature that some past accounts had ascribed to God.

⁷² *Third Critique*, Introduction IV, 5:181, p.68.

⁷³ *ibid.*, Introduction III, 5:177, p.64.

SECTION 1: FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO *KALLIAS ODER ÜBER DIE SCHÖNHEIT*, AND ITS PLACE IN SCHILLER'S THEORETICAL WRITING

The so-called *Kallias Letters* that Schiller wrote to his friend, Christian Gottfried Körner were a direct response to Kant's *Third Critique*, and thus the best text with which to start our survey. He intended to write his own sensuous-objective analytic of the beautiful to challenge Kant's rational-subjective account and to reveal the recognisable features in an object that lead us to call it beautiful. This would be part of the objective element in his project. Baumgarten had already attempted something of this kind, but mistakenly believed that the logical perfection of the object, as it appeals to the rational faculties of our minds, constituted its beauty.¹ Schiller wished to claim instead that the response to beauty is sensuous, arising, as Burke² and others had thought, through feeling rather than reason, but not, as they had said, merely subjective and personal.

This series of letters was not published in Schiller's lifetime, though its existence was well known, and Schiller recalled copies of individual letters from Körner to help him with his subsequent theoretical writing.³ He regarded the *Kallias Letters* as an unsuccessful and incomplete argument, and he never created a list of criteria by which to assess beauty or completed his analytic of beauty. Later criticisms include the fact that he never fully justified using his initial and enduring definition,

¹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on poetry : Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, (ed.), (tr.) with the original text, an introduction, and notes, Karl Aschenbrenner & William B. Holther, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954.

² Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, (ed.) Adam Phillips, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

In the *Aesthetic Letters* Schiller refers again to the inadequacy of Burke's empirical approach:

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, .XV: §5, fn. p.103.

³ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, fn. p.140. Letter: Schiller to Körner, 10.12.1793.

‘freedom in appearance’⁴ as a synonym for ‘beauty’.⁵ He has also generated debate among subsequent commentators about what he meant by his claim that beauty is ‘the form of a form’.⁶ The *Kallias Letters* were successful, though, in establishing an alternative to Kant’s account of how the mind can appreciate beauty. The letters would reward close textual analysis, but, in our context, will be discussed fairly briefly, simply to enable the reader to understand the Kantian origin of Schiller’s aesthetics and, thus ultimately, the extent to which his final position was very much his own.

We are now almost in a position to summarise Schiller’s attempt at a sensuous-objective theory. One more comment about Schiller’s philosophical starting point needs to be made, however. Karl Leonhard Reinhold was the populariser, and first amender of Kant, and knew Schiller.⁷ Although Kant admittedly refers to the sensuous intuitions as ‘content’, which is then ‘formed’ by the schemata of space and

⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.18, 08.02.1793.

‘Freiheit in der Erscheinung.’

⁵ Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.74.

⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.7, 25.01.1793.

The following three authors offer interpretations:

Eva Schaper, *Studies in Kant's Aesthetics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979, Ch.5, ‘Schiller's Kant: a chapter in the history of creative misunderstanding’, p.99ff.

Siegbert Latzel, ‘Die Aethetische Vernunft: Bemerkungen zu Schillers »Kallias«’, in *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*, 1961.

Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. This last interpretation seems the most plausible, see Beiser, op.cit. p.56.

‘Beauty is the form of a form, the form of perfection, because it consists not only in order, regularity and proportion, but in the *inner necessity* of order, regularity and proportion as it derives from the inner nature of a thing... it consists in the manner in which the form of an object derives from the object itself.’ - based on Schiller’s letter of 28.02.1793.

⁷ Sabine Roehr, ‘Zum Einfluß K.L. Reinholds auf Schillers Kant Rezeption’, in (ed.) Martin Bondeli and Wolfgang H. Schrader, *Die Philosophie Karl Leonhard Reinholds*, (Fichte Studien Supplementa Band 16), Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003, pp.105-121, even suggests that Schiller’s knowledge of Kant depended at least as much on his conversations with Reinhold, as on a reading of Kant’s work.

time,⁸ Reinhold gives greater prominence to the notions of both form and content in his account of perception. In his search for a more fundamental principle - the principle of consciousness - upon which he recommended that a revised Kantian philosophy should be grounded, he stated that the principle he required was one that would necessarily be available as a ready formed material content, but not as synthetic a priori knowledge, which presupposes the action of schemata and understanding.⁹ As we shall see shortly, this claim that any entity could have ready-formed content has an echo in Schiller's attempted analytic of the beautiful in the *Kallias Letters*.

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *A Critique of Pure Reason*, (ed.) (tr.) F. Max Müller, New York: Doubleday, 1966, A: 20 - 23; B: 34 - 38; §2, p.23.

⁹ Martin Bondeli, 'Reinholds Kant-Kritik in der Phase der Elementarphilosophie', in (ed.) Martin Bondeli & Wolfgang H. Schrader, *Die Philosophie Karl Leonhard Reinholds*, Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2003, p.23.

Schiller's argument in the *Kallias Letters*

Given this philosophical background, Schiller, as a practising creative artist, felt that the problem now facing writers and other artists was that the theories of Kant and his predecessors had fastened on to one small part of what it meant for something to be beautiful, and presented it as if it were the whole answer.¹⁰ His basic objection was that he was unable to apply their theory in his own work. Kant had resolved many issues; but even the *Third Critique* was inadequate:

Und geschadet hat sie [die Kritik] mir in der Tat, denn die Kühnheit, die lebendige Glut, die ich hatte, eh mir noch eine Regel bekannt war, vermisste ich noch seit mehreren Jahren. Ich *sehe* mich jetzt *erschaffen* und *bilden*, ich beobachte das Spiel der Begeisterung, und meine Einbildungskraft betrügt sich mit minder Freiheit, seitdem sie sich nicht mehr ohne Zeugen weiß.¹¹

A correctly framed theory would not impede artistic production. However, since argument was the most powerful weapon of the Kantians he was probably just about to offend, Schiller needed more than empirical, or rule-of-thumb, guidelines,

Alsdann kann Dich ein Kantianer immer noch mit der Frage in die Enge treiben, nach welchem Prinzip der Erkenntnis der Geschmack verfähre?¹²

Thus, he needed to establish some kind of relevant concept a priori. Throughout Schiller's writings on aesthetic theory, he tries to adhere to this method. While common sense is not enough to prove that any philosophical theory is true, and is no substitute for careful argument, the most reliable conclusions are nevertheless those

¹⁰Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam jun., 1999, p.6. letter, 25.01.1793.

¹¹ Letter to Körner, 25.05.1792., in (ed.) Jürgen Bolten, *Schillers Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984, p.93.

And it [the *Critique*] has in fact damaged me, because for several years I have been lacking the boldness, the inner fire I had before I knew of any rule. I can actually *see* myself now, *creating* and *forming*; I observe inspiration at play and my imagination conducts itself with less freedom, since it has realised that it is no longer without witnesses.

¹² Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam jun., 1999, p.11. letter, 08.02.1793.

Thereupon the Kantians can always drive you into a corner with the question, 'In accordance with what principle of the understanding does taste proceed?'

that, however abstruse the reasoning that has led to them, seem ultimately to be most plausible and agree best with common sense.¹³

Schiller challenged Kant's view about the subjective nature of aesthetics, but nevertheless agreed with much of what Kant said. He observed that there were two points at issue here. Firstly, whether an object can please us by means of a concept, and secondly, whether it can be judged by means of one. He agreed with Kant in answering, 'No,' to the question of how the object pleases us, it does so without our needing to refer it to a concept; but he disagreed about how we come to judge the object. He found it unsatisfactory to claim our feeling as the only valid criterion for such a judgement, and thought it should be possible to identify some kind of objective principle that enables us to judge.¹⁴ As a step towards this, Schiller analysed for himself what he thought happens when we appreciate a beautiful object. What we might call 'normal perception' takes place just as Kant said. But every so often, some material, some collection of intuitions, which the imagination might otherwise have been expected to submit to the schemata, resists. Their own nature has formed them already, and not, it would seem, by any external means. As Schiller says, being free and being determined by itself / oneself, from the inside outwards, is the same thing.¹⁵

¹³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.) (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXVIII: §4, fn. p.127.

¹⁴ Siegbert Latzel, 'Die Ästhetische Vernunft: Bemerkungen zu Schiller's "Kallias"', in *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*, 1961, vol. 2, pp. 31 – 40.

¹⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam jun., 1999, p.35. letter, 19.2.1793.

Frei sein und durch sich selbst bestimmt sein, von innen heraus bestimmt sein, ist eins.

[translator's note: In context, Schiller intends 'sich selbst' to be understood indifferently as 'itself' or 'oneself'. His point is that self-determination is the key, whether we are referring to animate or inanimate entities.]

Schiller is not clear about how far he wishes us to abandon or adapt the Kantian view of freedom. Despite R.D. Miller's classic book on Schiller and freedom, which interprets him sympathetically, this seems to be a continuing point of unresolved tension.

See R.D. Miller, *Schiller and the ideal of freedom: a study of Schiller's philosophical works with chapters on Kant*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

Therefore the object appears to be autonomous. Content and natural form match so well already, that the human mind is surprised¹⁶ and accepts that it has no further work to do in this respect. Thus, by the time this example is presented to the understanding, as happens automatically by the nature of the perceptual process, one of the formative preparative preliminaries to conceptualisation is unnecessary, or inappropriate. Indeed, as the senses receive a ready-formed sensible intuition, the understanding does not even recognise the aspect of the representation that we call beautiful as requiring conceptualisation, and applies no concepts to it.

However, this is where Schiller believes the practical reason becomes relevant. The practical reason and the will work together, more or less as one in the Kantian philosophy.¹⁷ A good, free will is self-determined, which means it is not formed by external influences.

Man drückt sich... richtiger aus, wenn man diejenigen Vorstellungen, welche nicht durch theoretische Vernunft sind und doch mit ihrer Form übereinstimmen, Nachahmungen von Begriffen, diejenigen Handlungen, welche nicht durch prakt. Vernunft sind und doch mit ihrer Form übereinstimmen, Nachahmungen freier Handlungen; kurz, wenn man beide Arten Nachahmungen (Analoge) der Vernunft nennt.¹⁸

Thus, the practical reason is capable of recognising that free acts of will performed by conscious beings conform with itself.¹⁹ A mechanical effect, by contrast, that follows

¹⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.13, 08.02.1793.

¹⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.15.

‘Praktische Vernunft und Willensbestimmung aus bloßer Vernunft sind eins’

However, in the *Aesthetic Letters*, XIX, §10, the will is less closely aligned with the practical reason.

¹⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.14, 08.02.1793.

We express ourselves more correctly, if we call those ideas (or representations) that do not exist through the exercise of the theoretical reason, and yet agree with its form, imitations of concepts, and those actions that do not come about through the exercise of the practical reason, and yet agree with its form, imitations of free actions; in short, if we call both kinds imitations (or Analogues) of reason.

¹⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.16, 08.02.1793.

the law of nature, can in fact never act freely, but if intuitions appear to have done so, and have form of their own, this unity of form and content, this representation (*Erscheinung*) becomes analogous to the freely acting individual. It is as though the 'thing', that is admittedly not yet an object in Kant's usual sense, has acted of its own free will; and this is one sense in which Schiller can describe beauty as 'objective'. For the practical reason, therefore, such a unity is 'freedom in appearance'. Beiser points out that there are some similarities here between Schiller's conception of the apparent autonomy of the beautiful object in which form and content naturally conform,²⁰ and Kant's notion of natural purpose, which seems to be self-organising, generating and developing from within as if by a natural necessity.²¹ Schiller was probably familiar with this passage, and he was certainly familiar, as we have said, with Reinhold's search for the ready formed proposition. Taken together, these suggested the model for Schiller's analysis of beautiful objects.

Now we shall see how Schiller is able to call the apparently unconceptualised beautiful 'object' an object. The understanding identifies and handles a beautiful object like any other object. When we outlined Kant's theory, there was some kind of momentary interruption in the perceptual operation of the mind, while the faculties engaged in free play and contemplated the beauty of a beautiful object. We now see that, on Schiller's analysis, this will not happen. In beautiful objects, in addition to the usual objective qualities to which concepts are applied, an additional attribute or an apparent regularity and conformity to rules is present, which is not among the concepts of the understanding. At this point an 'as if' enters the theory. Although the object's form and content harmonise coincidentally, the practical reason treats the

²⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.73.

²¹ Immanuel Kant, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (tr.) Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, *Critique of the power of judgement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §65, 5:374, p.245.

object 'as if' it were free. Schiller tells us that the practical reason makes an analogy between autonomous creatures or actions on one hand, and the harmoniously self-formed object on the other. As we saw in our summary of Kant, the reason is accustomed to making analogies, as it attempts to give suitable expression to the aesthetic ideas, so this is a legitimate Kantian function of the practical reason. The application of the practical reason to autonomous beings and actions is moral; its application to objects is aesthetic.²²

The understanding therefore does not perceive the beauty in beautiful objects, but, with the senses, fulfils its normal perceptual role in conceptualising size, colour, functional name and so on. It is as if two streams of mental perception are at work simultaneously, the understanding scanning the representations of the imagination for inanimate objects, the practical reason scanning the manifold of perception and sensible intuitions for moral actions plus either coincidentally or artistically ready-formed content. Although Schaper views the involvement of the practical reason as a connection between the object and the noumenal world,²³ the account given above shows we are not obliged to agree with her that, by saying that the perceiving subject could be *hinweggedacht*, Schiller was working with a Baumgartian definition of objectivity that committed him to situating beauty in any equivalent of the thing-in-itself.²⁴ Beiser believes it would be equally permissible to speak of 'thinking the

²² Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit and Über Anmut und Würde*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1999, p.18, 8.2.93.

²³ Eva Schaper, *Studies in Kant's Aesthetics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979, Ch.5, p.113.

²⁴ Schaper's opinion rests on this comment:

Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.44, 23.2.1793.

Du wirst auch mit mir darüber einig sein, daß diese Natur, und diese Heautonomie objektive Beschaffenheiten der Gegenstände sind, denen ich sie zuschreibe; denn sie bleiben ihnen, auch wenn das vorstellende Subjekt ganz hinweggedacht wird.

representing subject away', even for properties that Kant himself recognised as being objective.²⁵ Schaper's point is that anything the will freely acknowledges beyond the limits of understanding would become 'objective'. Therefore, if Schiller could claim that mankind applies freedom beyond the moral realm, to sensuous material, he would be able to discover that some experiences are unlimited by the categories of the understanding. Experiences of beauty could be 'experiences of the real freely appearing'.²⁶ However, the claims Schiller makes in these letters are actually less ambitious, and rule this possibility out:

... weil diese Freiheit dem Objekte von der Vernunft nur geliehen wird, *da nichts frei sein kann als das Übersinnliche, und Freiheit nie als solche in die Sinne fallen kann...* daß ein Gegenstand frei *erscheine*, nicht *wirklich ist*...²⁷

The final point mentioned in our introductory survey of Kant's aesthetics, and for which we have not yet considered Schiller's response, is Kant's distinction between free and dependent beauty. Kant described these two kinds of beauty because of a difficulty faced by both rationalists and sensationalists: how to distinguish the logically good from the beautiful. Baumgarten's version of perfection, for instance, cannot theoretically be distinguished from the technically perfect, or the fit for purpose. Schiller was puzzled, however, by Kant's claim that dependent beauty is not pure. Precisely because Kant recognised the logical / aesthetic distinction, Schiller

You will also agree with me that this nature and this heautonomy are objective qualities of the objects to which I ascribe them; for they retain them, even when the representing subject has been completely imagined away.

²⁵ Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.55.

²⁶ Eva Schaper, *Studies in Kant's Aesthetics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979, Ch.5, p.113.

²⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.17, 08.02.1793.

... because this freedom is only lent to the object by the reason, since nothing can be free but the suprasensible, and freedom as such can never come under the senses... ...that an object appears to be free, but is not really...

By contrast, when we later come to study the theoretical writings of Friedrich Hölderlin, a case could arguably be made for saying that Schaper's interpretation of Schiller comes quite close to describing Hölderlin's conception of beauty. See chapter 9 below.

would have expected him to have been able to accept that dependent beauty is nevertheless beautiful; for, as Schiller points out, most of the things we find beautiful, including all works of art, and most of the beauties of nature, are in practice dependent, referred to the kinds of things they are.²⁸ According to Kant, this makes them conditioned, impure and thus inferior. Schiller's theory, however, allows us to perceive both perfection and beauty simultaneously and alongside each other. As he says, beauty is at its most dazzling when it overpowers the logical constitution of the object; and how can it overpower if not faced with resistance?²⁹ Thus, once Schiller has set up a scheme in which separate faculties of the mind deal concomitantly with the logical and the aesthetic, Kant's free / adherent distinction loses its force, and confirms Schiller's belief that previous thinkers had missed the fact that beauty goes beyond logic, as when, for instance, something is not merely perfect, but also beautiful.

²⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.6, 25.01.1793.

²⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.7, 25.01.1793.

Implications of the *Kallias Letters*

We stated at the outset of this chapter that *Kallias Letters* was a starting point for Schiller's later thought. What have we established? Diagram 1)³⁰ is intended to represent in schematic form the standard Kantian processes of perception and the power of judgement. The practical reason and the expression of aesthetic ideas is indicated, but we should note that the practical reason plays no part in perception as such. Diagram 2)³¹ represents what Schiller has told us in these letters. The mind's operations are recognisably Kantian, but with one or two modifications. Perception by means of schemata and concepts remains unchanged, except for the fact that the understanding no longer has the task of somehow - but without applying any concepts - using a power of judgement to recognise when it has been confronted by a beautiful object, shutting down the doors on its store of concepts (Kant's word is 'withhold'), and permitting the schemata to enjoy free play with the sensible intuitions. Instead, perception continues as an uninterrupted process, but the beauty of the object is appreciated by the use of the practical reason, which is, as in Kant, in any case constantly at work engaging with the moral side of life.

What is the significance of this? We shall focus on the positive results. Firstly, although it is true that great beauty can bring us up short and interrupt our thoughts, it seems more plausible to accept a theory that allows us to apply concepts and yet recognise other aspects of the object at the same time. Schiller does not need to accommodate any additional faculty, the power of judgement, into the operation of the human mind. As his theory stood, Kant did not really explain why we were even entitled to call the beautiful object an object, until we had finished contemplating its

³⁰ see Appendix.

³¹ see Appendix.

beauty. Secondly, Kant himself accepts that beauty can be a symbol of morality.³² Schiller's theory suggests some means for how we might make sense of this claim. Kant had actually complicated this task, by specifically excluding the practical reason from an aesthetic rôle. The practical reason has an interest in its object, whether as being useful, or as being good.³³ Thirdly, Schiller re-positions harmony and balance, still closely associated with the aesthetic, in the beautiful object, not the human mind, though with qualifications. We shall see these ideas re-emerge as mental phenomena in *Anmut und Würde*, however. In *Kallias Letters* the term 'play' is no longer as significant as it was with Kant, though it too will re-emerge, this time in the *Aesthetic Letters*.

For Schiller's later aesthetics, several key elements are relevant. While his view of freedom is closely related to the Kantian meaning: autonomously determined by the moral law, Schiller begins to broaden his use of the word in this essay. He associates the condition of not being externally determined (in objects) with freedom. This prepares us for the rather wider meaning of freedom in the *Aesthetic Letters*: either self-determined, or undetermined. Together with the analogy between morality and beauty, this gives beauty more than mere contemplative, Kantian value. Perhaps even more importantly for our understanding of the *Aesthetic Letters*, is the fact that the understanding and practical reason are now part of a 'family'.³⁴ They are not completely isolated faculties of the mind, carrying out unconnected functions. Kant probably never meant us to think of the faculties as separately as this, but it is possible

³²Immanuel Kant, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (tr.) Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, *Critique of the power of judgement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §59, 5:353, p.225.

³³ Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.60. He gives two references to Kant: 5:221, §11 & 5:222, §12. (p.106, in Guyer / Matthews edition)

³⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.15, 8.2.93.

Schiller did so.³⁵ In the *Aesthetic Letters*, he warns us of the difficulties, once we analyse anything into parts, of then recreating it as a whole.³⁶ Understanding and practical reason work together and simultaneously. They are similar in that they belong to the transcendental reason, and they are similar in having a practical rôle. By the time he wrote the *Aesthetic Letters*, Schiller appears to have decided that the similarities between the practical and theoretical reason were greater than their differences, as they constituted a single stream of mental activity, and he placed them together on the side of the form drive. However, he still needed to clarify how there could be a direct link between the noumenal side of rationality, in the practical reason, and something that is objectively present, ie. beauty, as Schaper has pointed out.

Latzel's article comments that beauty deceives the understanding, tricking it into thinking it has already completed part of its task, and further tricking the practical reason into accepting it. However, although reason happily ascribes freedom to the beautiful object, as it apparently agrees with the activity of the practical reason, Schiller avoids connotations of deception by his use of the word, 'analogy'. By making an analogy, the practical reason has abstracted from the beautiful object, and made a conscious comparison with autonomy. There is an ambivalent awareness in the mind of the beholder that objects are the kinds of thing usually neatly categorised by the understanding, dependent and inanimate things, fully determined in all respects, and incapable of exercising autonomy in their own right.

Overall, the *Kallias Letters* provide a first step towards showing the extent to which the faculties of the mind interact. If every part of the mind is fully occupied in the integrated task of human living, it will be impossible for one element to create

³⁵ Eva Schaper, *Studies in Kant's Aesthetics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979, Ch.5, p.99.

³⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.) (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XVIII, §4, fn. p.127.

awkward self-consciousness in another as it scrutinises its work. And possibly, as a result, Schiller will be able to resume his creative activities.

CHAPTER 2

ANMUT UND WÜRDE: GRACE, DIGNITY, AND THEIR PLACE IN AESTHETICS AND MORALITY

The *Kallias Letters* involve the practical reason in the perception of beauty, and show how we can perceive beauty alongside our perception of all the qualities of objects identified by the theoretical reason, or understanding. *Anmut und Würde* shows how the perception of beauty relates to the main activity of the practical reason, morality. The *Kallias Letters* relate beauty to our sensuous and phenomenal life; *Anmut und Würde* relates one kind of beauty, moral beauty, to the transcendental. Thus, by the time Schiller went on to write the *Aesthetic Letters*, he already had a clear idea of the central and unifying position occupied by aesthetics in his conception of humanity. This extended Kant's achievement in the *Third Critique*, which linked the understanding and practical reason through the power of reflective judgement. Unlike Kant, however, Schiller tried to integrate the capacities of the human mind into aesthetic activity, rather than create bridges among them.

Whereas the *Kallias Letters* tried to show the objective nature of beauty, *Anmut und Würde* explores both the subjective conditions of grace and dignity, and their objective appearance to the eyes of others. Grace is typically a 'movable beauty', that can come and go, and is not 'fixed' or essential to its subject.¹ Moral dignity, Schiller says, can be sublime. According to what we have read in the *Kallias Letters*, he should be showing us that they are objectively present properties, but Schiller does not clarify the issue of objectivity any further. This, Beiser rightly suggests, is problematic:

¹ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.70.

Anmut ist eine *bewegliche* Schönheit... Dadurch unterscheidet sie sich von der *fixen* Schönheit...

It therefore presupposes the general aesthetic theory Schiller had already outlined in his *Kallias Briefe*. It is indeed simply an application of that theory to human actions. Since, however, Schiller never completed that theory, *Anmut und Würde* is a house without a foundation, or at best without a firm and finished one.²

Berghahn's explanation is that in the *Kallias Letters* and *Anmut und Würde* Schiller was engaged in two different tasks.³ In the latter essay he was doing something comparable to what Kant was doing in the *Third Critique*, namely, examining the subjective conditions for the perception of beauty. In the former he was investigating the nature of beauty itself. Therefore *Anmut und Würde* is bound to share more similarities with Kant's writing. However, when Schiller examines our subjective experience of behaving beautifully he is looking at the subject's experience of something that is also perceptible to outsiders. Therefore, we still cannot claim that Schiller accepted what Kant wrote regarding subjective aesthetic judgements. He dealt with the subjective experience of moral beauty, only once he had provided a partial explanation of how beauty in general could relate to the objective. His reference to the Analytic of the Beautiful,⁴ the writing of which was adumbrated at the end of the *Kallias Letters*,⁵ promises to explain elsewhere the relationship between the objective properties of a thing, and the way in which they fit it to stand as the symbol of an idea, but he never wrote this analytic. Schiller is admittedly investigating the aesthetic aspects of moral conduct, not aesthetics *per se*, but central to both was his expectation that beauty was a sensuous / objective property,

² Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.80. Beiser thinks Schiller still presupposed, but did not repeat, the unpublished general position set out in the *Kallias Letters*.

³ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, 'Nachwort', p.164.

⁴ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.80.

⁵ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.56.

recognised by the practical reason. Things have all kinds of appearances quite apart from beauty, and it is sometimes immaterial whether we can analyse exactly what gives them that appearance. For whatever reason, Schiller focuses in *Anmut und Würde*, not on objectivity, but on the involvement of the practical reason in aesthetics.

In the *Kallias Letters* Schiller made an analogy between the moral autonomy of the human subject and the apparent autonomy of some objects. It was an appearance, and possibly an illusion, created by a naturally occurring agreement between form and content. To explain the presence of moral beauty or sublimity, Schiller then refers this version of freedom back again to the human subject. Morally, the human subject is already autonomous, as Kant assumed and Schiller accepted at the outset of the *Kallias Letters*. *Anmut und Würde*, however, now draws attention to the possibility that this other, newly identified kind of freedom can naturally occur in mankind also, as an agreement between form – or moral reasoning – and content – or human action. Once again, as in the *Kallias Letters*, an ‘as if’ is present. Moral grace and sublimity are exhibited in actions that apparently take place through the spontaneous agreement of desire and duty, rather than by the imposition of moral law, though they will, in fact, always agree with morality. Thus the connection between beauty and freedom, previously identified in the *Kallias Letters*, is now applied to human beings, their appearance and their behaviour. In the letters Schiller discussed only ‘objects’. Schiller’s original idea of freedom originated in Kant, a view that acknowledges human beings as capable of setting a law for themselves. If they are capable of doing so, we can presuppose that they were capable of doing so, even before the instant in which they actually did so. At that point, however, they were not yet determined by the moral law, they were natural beings, but capable of self-determination and conformity to the moral law. Perhaps from this Schiller derives his

conception of freedom as a state of harmonious indetermination, which can apparently be present naturally. In this way, *Anmut und Würde* and the *Aesthetic Letters* rest on views of freedom first given in the *Kallias Letters*.⁶ The concepts of both Kantian freedom and freedom as the undetermined continue to be used through Schiller's theoretical works, though without being either explicitly reconciled or sharply distinguished.

As in the *Kallias Letters*, it is worth considering how much of the Kantian system survived here, since Schiller still wanted to silence anti-Kantian 'heretics'.⁷ Once again we note the continued importance of the dichotomy between form and content, or matter, in our evaluation of beauty:

Daher hat auch die Schönheit des Baues, *als bloßes Naturprodukt*, ihre bestimmten Perioden der Blüthe, der Reife und des Verfalles, die das Spiel zwar beschleunigen, aber niemals verzögern kann; und ihr gewöhnliches Ende ist, daß die *Masse* allmählich über die *Form* Meister wird und der lebendige Bildungstrieb in dem *aufgespeicherten* Stoff sich sein eigenes Grab bereitet.⁸

The direct reference here is to the way physical beauty declines into corpulent middle age, but the contrast between mere accumulated, passive matter and the shaping activity of the form drive is referred to in more general terms in the *Aesthetic Letters*, as a stage in the development of mankind. Form and matter emerge in that work as two of Schiller's most significant terms in the polarised conflict between reason and sensation. In the *Kallias Letters* it is still possible, as we have said, to locate form and content fairly easily in the framework of a Kantian perceptual scheme. In *Anmut und*

⁶Berghahn also believes they can be understood only against that background. See:

Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, 'Anmerkungen', p.146, also 'Nachwort', p.160.

⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *Anmut und Würde*, (ed.) Berghahn, 'Nachwort', p.164.

⁸ *Anmut und Würde*, p.97.

Hence the beauty of the human build, *as a mere product of nature*, has its periods of bloom, ripeness and decay, which luck might delay, but can never avoid; and its usual end is that *mass* gradually becomes master of *form*, and the living formative drive prepares its own grave for itself, as mere stored up substance.

Würde, however, Kant's perceptual theory is less visible. Schiller concentrates on the side of the practical reason, and on the interaction between beauty and the will. He portrays the will as operating in the mind of a sensuous-rational creature such as the human being on the unformed or raw content of both animal passion and perception, and forming them in a moral context. Later, in the *Aesthetic Letters*, much of the Kantian structure of perception *per se* is not only ignored, but perhaps effectively abandoned. In both perception and aesthetics the conflict between the sense and form drives becomes the sole explanation for how formed material content comes into being.

Material content, in both *Anmut und Würde* and the *Aesthetic Letters*, is passive. The claim is that we suffer or undergo our perceptions, emotions and passions.⁹ Because of the activity of the will, however, we need never be the victims of these natural capacities, which we share with all other animals. The will, by applying itself to our animal instincts, forms them. Thus, thought and all forms of reason are active faculties. The morally good person may sometimes act in accordance with the initial inclination of his animal nature, but does so only on the authority of his will, which all his faculties respect, if he shows *Würde*, and which he or she loves, in the case of *Anmut*.¹⁰ Any base passions will have been modified, controlled or subdued by the will, unless they happen already to be 'formed' and reconciled with them. Thus, the practical reason can be said to actively mould or form the raw content of experience into something distinctively fitted to the human being.¹¹

⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *Anmut und Würde*, (ed.) Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.122.

¹⁰ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.126.

¹¹ Friedrich Schiller, *Anmut und Würde*, (ed.) Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.119.

Yet passivity has a place in beautiful action.¹² Humans can sometimes be relaxed or weary, or slack. Grace itself can be of two kinds, the calming and the enlivening.¹³ Thus, tense, overwrought, or excessively analytical people can be calmed and brought into harmony by social contact with those possessing the quality of calming grace; the weary or lazy can be encouraged to exert their mental faculties, and also their power of doing good, by increased contact with those active people whose life exhibits enlivening grace. Those who show a true moral beauty that goes beyond a reluctantly self-enforced adherence to the Categorical Imperative, whose whole life radiates an enjoyment in doing good, and whose animal instincts have been trained into an easy dispositional conformity with the standards set by the will, are indeed relaxed. It is this relaxation that gives them their grace, and permits their movements to be graceful, rather than restrained or well-trained. By claiming that there are these two sorts of grace, Schiller foreshadows the distinction he begins to make, though does not develop, in the *Aesthetic Letters*¹⁴ between energetic and relaxing beauty.

From the previous paragraph we can see that *Anmut und Würde* occupies an intermediate position between the *Kallias Letters* and the *Aesthetic Letters*, not just chronologically, but also in terms of the development of Schiller's thought. The occasional appearance of the idea of two conflicting drives takes us forwards to the *Aesthetic Letters*, where drives are central to Schiller's account of human nature.¹⁵

¹² Friedrich Schiller, *Anmut und Würde*, (ed.) Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, pp.131, 132.

¹³ Friedrich Schiller, *Anmut und Würde*, (ed.) Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.131.

Es gibt eine belebende und eine beruhigende Grazie.

¹⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.) (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XVI: §§2, 3, pp.112,113.

¹⁵ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.116.

Würde represents the state of balance usual in a good man between natural or animal drive and the activity of the will. For a person to exhibit *Würde*, he needs strength, so that the animal passions can be controlled.¹⁶ In the *Aesthetic Letters* this condition appears as one stage through which an individual or society could pass, or in which it could exist. In the case of *Anmut*, animal drive and will are in natural, unforced harmony. To achieve *Anmut*, love and softness are needed. This is a condition related to the effects of calming beauty that Schiller later admired as an antidote to the rational tensions of educated life. *Anmut* and *Würde* are each appropriate in their own spheres, and can therefore subsist in the same person,¹⁷ and would ideally do so.¹⁸ Such a suggestion had been developed further by the time Schiller wrote the *Aesthetic Letters*, so that the full, aesthetically capable person depends both on an apparently unforced harmony, and, just as much, on the existence of a healthy tension between the inner drives. To refer back to the *Kallias Letters*, however, the person Schiller is describing in *Anmut und Würde* achieves both inner and outer beauty in a way comparable to the way in which an object is beautiful.¹⁹ Whereas the practical reason recognises the intrinsic and coincidental harmony of form and content in a beautiful

¹⁶ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.118.

¹⁷ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.126.

¹⁸ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.110.

Die menschliche Natur ist ein verbundeneres Ganze in der Wirklichkeit, als es dem Philosophen... erlaubt ist sie erscheinen zu lassen.

Human nature is a more closely bound whole in reality than philosophers ...can allow it to appear.

¹⁹ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.83.

...was in dem Reiche der Vernunft harmonisch ist, wird sich durch keinen Mißklang in der Sinnenwelt offenbaren.

...whatever is harmonious in the realm of reason will never manifest itself as anything discordant in the world of the senses.

object, often with surprise, and delight,²⁰ the beautiful person, or soul, is not only recognised as such by an observer, as his or her inner freedom becomes visible in the phenomenal world, but his or her inner life is itself an experience of this harmony. Grace is the result. The person who epitomises the Kantian exemplar of morality, the person likely to exhibit worth or dignity, has a closer aesthetic affinity with sublimity than with beauty.²¹

Nevertheless, by means of the concept of *Würde*, Schiller still makes it possible for us to accord the highest respect to people who overcome great personal distaste in order to do what they regard as their duty, or for us to admire the passionate individual who resists enormous temptations and does his duty nevertheless. At the same time Schiller stresses that respect from outsiders, is of comparatively minor importance compared to what is already taking place within the person. The true respect associated with dignity is the respect that the passions are compelled to show for the moral law, or will.²² The concept of *Würde* also shows how we can sometimes justify saying, 'He is a good man, he has done the right thing, but I don't find him very likeable.' At its greatest, however, *Würde* exemplifies the

²⁰ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.128.

In der Anmut... wie in der Schönheit überhaupt, sieht die Vernunft ihre Forderung in der Sinnlichkeit erfüllt, und überraschend tritt ihr eine ihrer Ideen in der Erscheinung entgegen. Diese unerwartete Zusammenstimmung des Zufälligen der Natur mit dem Notwendigen der Vernunft erweckt ein Gefühl frohen Beifalls (*Wohlgefallen*)... Liebe; ein Gefühl, das von Anmut und Schönheit unzertrennlich ist.

In grace, as in any kind of beauty, reason see its demands fulfilled in the sensuous world, and amazingly, one of its own ideas steps forward towards it in the phenomenal world. This unexpected consonance of the contingency of nature and the necessity of reason awakens a feeling of happy approval (*pleasure*) ... love; a feeling that is inseparable from grace and beauty.

²¹ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.122.

²² Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.128.

sublime.²³ It is awe-inspiring, admirable, impressive, unforgettable, terrifying, though perhaps also uncomfortable, horrifying or tragic. It forces us to look within ourselves, and cast our eyes down in respect.²⁴ Grace we simply love; it expresses and creates an unequivocal ambience of joy and ease, and someone achieving grace is beautiful, with an active beauty that grace lends - like Venus's belt - even to the most ugly. Usually, according to Schiller, we demand simultaneously that the performance of virtue should be graceful, and that those acting from inclination should do so with dignity, or moral worth. Grace and dignity thus each ensure that certain traits are developed, and others controlled,²⁵ so that the law of morality actually requires a balance between will and our more primitive drives.²⁶

Schiller's view of grace, dignity and the ability to act morally enabled him to bring something extra to the Kantian conception of morality, namely, the relevance of virtue. He agreed with Aristotle's view that virtue is a disposition to do good.²⁷ Schiller recognised that this is what has developed within the human subject who displays *Anmut*, and it is epitomised in the *schöne Seele*,²⁸ which is human

²³ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.113.

So wie die Anmut der Ausdruck einer schönen Seele ist, so ist Würde der Ausdruck einer erhabenen Gesinnung.

Just as grace is the expression of a beautiful soul, so dignity is the expression of a sublime disposition.

²⁴ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.132.

²⁵ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.124.

²⁶ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.123.

²⁷ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.106.

...Tugend ist nichts anders »als eine Neigung zu der Pflicht«.

...Virtue is nothing other "than an inclination to duty".

²⁸ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.111.

perfection,²⁹ someone who loves virtue. Because the animal instincts do not conflict with the rules of reason, as enacted by the will, the faculty of the practical reason in the graceful person need not be strong. Despite Schiller's sometimes contentious way of aligning grace and dignity with generalisations about the intrinsic nature of the sexes, we can at least credit him with having noticed that human beings are made up of varying mixes of sensuousness and rationality.³⁰ On Schiller's reading, Kant's moral philosophy neglects the sensuous element; it weights rationality too heavily, and in doing so apparently misrepresents much of the inner debate that accompanies moral decision making.³¹ It also ignores the individual's motivations for behaving morally, along with some of the most familiar grounds on which we might approve or admire a philanthropist, reformer or saint. The addition of an awareness of virtue to the Kantian account was important for the direction taken by Schiller's later writing. If morality is a purely rational process, as Kant seemed to suggest, moral reasoning might very well be an inborn, fixed ability, arbitrarily strong or weak in the individual case. If, however, morality also has a virtuous component, there is a possibility that some aspects of moral judgement can be trained, encouraged or developed. Although

In einer schöner Seele ist es also, wo Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft, Pflicht und Neigung harmonieren, und Grazie ist ihr Ausdruck in der Erscheinung.

So it is in a beautiful soul that sensibility and reason, duty and inclination harmonise, and grace is their expression in outward appearance.

²⁹ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.110.

Das Siegel der vollendeten Menschheit... was man unter *schöner Seele* versteht.

The stamp of perfect humanity... what we understand by 'beautiful soul'.

³⁰ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, pp.55, 113.

³¹ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.107.

In der Kantischen Moralphilosophie ist die Idee der *Pflicht* mit einer Härte vorgetragen, die alle Grazien davon zurückschreckt...

In the Kantian moral philosophy the idea of duty is presented with a rigidity that scares off all the graces...

he sees *Anmut* as a gift, or talent, Schiller's belief that contact with the right kind of people can help us improve our moral disposition³² shows that it was a talent that could be nurtured, and that it was already important to him that this should be possible. The *Aesthetic Letters* could make no sense, unless Schiller could claim that humankind is capable of moral and aesthetic improvement.

Besides the light these comments throw on the concept of *Anmut*, they also indicate the way Schiller believed reason relates to its objects. The reason's recognition of the ready-formed sensible object is referred to as 'love', by which Schiller did not mean that love is the driving force behind either morality or aesthetics, or that it is the key relationship among people who show grace. 'Love' accounted for the reason's pleasure at seeing its ideas exemplified in the sensible world.³³ However, it was also the term that Hölderlin later adopted to help explain what holds the world together as a unity. Schiller's comments on grace, beauty and love need only minor modifications to fit equally well into the pantheism of Hölderlin's *Hyperion*.

Es ist das Große selbst, was in der Anmut und Schönheit sich nachgeahmt und in der Sittlichkeit sich befriedigt findet, es ist der Gesetzgeber selbst, der *Gott* in uns, der mit seinem eigenen Bilde in der Sinnenwelt spielt. Daher ist das Gemüt aufgelöst in der Liebe...³⁴

³² Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.132.

³³ Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as philosopher: A re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.84.

See chapter 8 below.

³⁴ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.130.

It is greatness itself that sees itself imitated in grace and beauty and finds its satisfaction in morality; it is the lawgiver Himself (or itself), the *God* in us, that plays with His (its) own image in the world of the senses. Thus, the mind is dissolved in love...

[A note on translation: Note that the 'lawgiver' in this quotation is the human will / practical reason. Schiller is drawing an analogy between the will and God here. Having a will is like each of us having an internal, individualised god of our own. Perhaps there is a slight ambiguity in both the German and the English. Hölderlin's version would have identified 'lawgiver' only with God.]

Both Schiller and Hölderlin were aware of the Platonic antecedents of this term, but Hölderlin chose to give love a more powerful metaphysical rôle.³⁵ Schiller further says that the man conscious of his own guilt constantly fears that, in the sensuous world, he will meet his inner lawgiver, his enemy. While not strictly agreeing with what Hölderlin would go on to say, this statement could certainly provide the germ of Hölderlin's belief that, unless we embrace the beauty of the world with love, we shall have to live as fearful victims of a fate that will ultimately destroy us.³⁶ Thus, *Anmut und Würde* not only gives us pointers towards the later development of Schiller's own thought, but, despite the fact that Schiller had recognised the selfish, immoral aspects of love too,³⁷ these few pages in *Anmut und Würde* 'had let the genie out of the bottle' and encouraged the Romantic movement's elevation of the philosophical and aesthetic status of love.³⁸

Anmut und Würde continued using the ideas of form and content from the *First Critique*. From the *Third Critique* it took the topic of beauty and an adapted version of the notion of the aesthetic ideas, both of which Schiller first considered in the *Kallias Letters*. It goes well beyond the *Kallias Letters* by linking the newly discovered, aesthetic role of the practical reason into the moral theory of the *Second Critique*. Thus, Schiller has called upon various aspects of Kant's work and, with some modification, applied them to his own aesthetics. The effect of these

³⁵ Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, pp.382, 383 & 403.

³⁶ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.130.

³⁷ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.130.

Die Liebe ist zugleich das Großmütigste und das Selbstsüchtigste in der Natur...

Love is at once the most magnanimous and the most selfish thing in nature...

³⁸ Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as philosopher: A re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.85.

modifications is that the *Kallias Letters* and *Anmut und Würde* together develop a stronger awareness than Kant of the interdependence of the human faculties, which, in some contexts, exert a combined influence. Schiller reintroduced, but did not demonstrate, the idea that beauty might be objective. In the same spirit he brought the non-rational, emotional or physical elements in the human being back to prominence in morality. While Schiller is regarded as one of the great proponents of classicism in German literary thought, and hence also as being committed to Enlightenment rationality, he himself has blurred some boundaries in this respect, and, to make an extremely sweeping claim, has already opened a way for the increased respect for the sensuous and emotional in art that we find slightly later, in the work of the Romantics. The further aesthetic implications of the philosophical approach that Schiller began to work out in his published texts will not be reviewed at this point. Instead, we shall move on to examine the philosophical position set out in his next publication, *The Aesthetic Letters*, which was published soon after *Anmut und Würde*. Once the philosophical basis for Schiller's arguments in that book have also been outlined, we shall be in a good position to consider the aesthetic theory that emerges from both works, assessing them in our final chapter on Schiller, alongside *Naïve and Sentimental*, the last of his theoretical works, and the one that relates most directly to artistic and literary issues.

CHAPTER 3

**LETTERS ON THE AESTHETIC EDUCATION OF MANKIND¹: POSSIBLE
WAYS OF EXPLAINING SCHILLER'S GENERAL PHILOSOPHICAL
POSITION²**

Schiller's third significant theoretical work, *The Aesthetic Letters*, is a difficult book to summarise. This is so, even if, as indicated in the introductory chapter to this thesis, we do not consider its political dimensions, but concentrate only on Schiller's general philosophy and aesthetics. We shall approach this problem by considering the work from three angles. This chapter establishes his general philosophical position. The next deals with the aesthetic theory that rests on that philosophy, and the final chapter on Schiller looks at the implications we can draw from this for art and the artist, and integrates the discussion with relevant material from *Anmut und Würde* and *Naïve and Sentimental*.³ At least some aspects of this analytical task have been attempted before, and in some detail, for instance by P.T. Murray,⁴ and Frederick Beiser.⁵ With some help from their work, we shall show that, in the *Aesthetic Letters*, Kant's philosophy is no longer fully recognisable, though its influence can be detected alongside features from Reinhold and Fichte. Schiller now held a philosophical position that was largely his own. However, he no longer referred to his earlier search for an objective definition of beauty.⁶ Instead, he devised a model of humanity that he hoped could account for both the possibility of generalising about

¹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (trans.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

² see also figures 1 - 5 in appendix.

³ Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005. (based on the Schiller Nationalausgabe, 1962.)

⁴ Patrick T. Murray, *The development of German aesthetic theory from Kant to Schiller: a philosophical commentary on Schiller's 'Aesthetic Education of Man' (1795)*, Lewiston NY; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1994.

⁵ Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

⁶ Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.75.

aesthetic judgements and the presence of individual variations in people's aesthetic responses. Some of the ideas Schiller used as he moved away from the Kantian philosophy and aesthetics reappear in the thought of Hölderlin and Schlegel, who figure in our later chapters. This is so, even though Schiller saw himself and was accepted as a proponent of classicism, rather than of the Romantic school that emerged among the younger generation. He thus forms a kind of intermediary point between Kantian aesthetics and the Romantics.

In the *Aesthetic Letters* Schiller's consistent theme is the two-fold, yet unified, nature of the human being. Three main lines of argument take him towards his desired conclusion, but he did not indicate which of these was intended to be decisive. The first argument combines the historical and cultural,⁷ the second is analytical, probably following Fichte,⁸ and the third, for which Schiller is probably best known, is further adapted from the version of Kant's theory of the faculties that he used in the *Kallias Letters* and *Anmut und Würde*.⁹ The rest of this chapter outlines the philosophy represented by these three strands, before moving on to look at the aesthetic it underpinned. Some of this discussion may appear inconclusive, or even slightly tangential to questions of aesthetics, but it represents an attempt to follow Schiller, who believed it was important to establish a philosophical basis for his aesthetics.

The book starts with the historical / cultural argument that modern eighteenth century society is fragmented and over-specialised, to the detriment of social cohesion. People forced to live in this way are degraded and undeveloped, because

⁷Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, Letters III - VI; XXIV.

The influences here were probably Rousseau and Herder, rather than Kant.

⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XI, p.73.

⁹ first introduced in Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XII, p.79.

social demands compel them to develop only one aspect of their inner self at the expense of any other. Mankind has progressed to this point from solitary, bestial, hut-dwelling savagery in ancient times. In that era mankind was, effectively, subhuman, but once the bonds of society formed, humans enjoyed a simple but fulfilling way of life, making use of all their abilities, though at a lower level of civilisation than eighteenth century Europe.¹⁰ Schiller had read Rousseau and Herder before becoming interested in the critical philosophy. From Rousseau came the idea of a harmonious, almost utopian society derived from theoretical historical principles, and from Herder a more scholarly, empirically based awareness of historical generalisation and progress.¹¹ The challenge Schiller presents here is how to continue these historical changes so that, instead of our present one-sided development, full human potentiality can be encouraged, to the general benefit of humanity and society. We shall see this fear that over-specialisation will lead to social fragmentation and individual inadequacy repeated in the work of both Hölderlin and Schlegel.¹² They, like Schiller, tended to blame these problems on the over-valuation of rationality, and the neglect of sensuous and practical abilities. All three believed that a developed aesthetic awareness could correct this imbalance.

Having outlined these social shortcomings, Schiller explains his first theory of the self.¹³ It is a rather Fichtean analysis, that defines a human being, both logically and practically, by the interaction of the conditioned and unconditioned aspects of the

¹⁰ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, II - III, pp.7-15.

¹¹ The influence of Rousseau and Herder has not been followed up in this thesis. We have concentrated on the aesthetic influences of Kant and the critical philosophy.

¹² See chapters 6 and 10 below.

¹³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XI, p.73ff.

individual subject.¹⁴ His analysis is apparently intended to demonstrate that beauty is a necessary condition of being human,¹⁵ though arguably, he does not do so.¹⁶ He perhaps presumes that the ‘aesthetic condition’ of balance and harmony, and of content-packed indeterminacy, that we encounter subsequently,¹⁷ is equivalent to beauty, and thus demonstrates his point. The argument begins by stating that human beings are made up of Person (*Person*), our unchanging part, and condition (*Zustand*), which constantly changes. Person is eternal and unchanging. It is a potentiality;¹⁸ undetermined, unlimited and infinite. However, mankind cannot be infinite, and yet existent in time and space - only a godhead can be so¹⁹ - therefore Person is the unconditioned aspect of a finite being, such as man, who, if not located in time, would be nothing more than a potential for pure, eternal intelligence. Condition provides time, place, results, the succession of events and becoming; it enables the succession of perceptions by means of which, just as with Fichte’s *Ich / Nicht-Ich* dichotomy,²⁰ the enduring ‘I’ of the person becomes aware of itself as a phenomenon (*Erscheinung*),

¹⁴ see, for example, J.C. Fichte, ‘Lectures concerning the scholar’s vocation, 1794’, in (ed.) trans. Daniel Breazeale, *Early Philosophical Writings*, Ithaca NY; London, Cornell University Press, 1993, p.147.

¹⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, X, §7, p.69.

¹⁶ Anthony Savile, *Aesthetic Reconstructions*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, p.198.

¹⁷ see chapter 4 below.

¹⁸ A little later in the thesis we shall need to consider what Schiller might have meant by a ‘potentiality’.

¹⁹ Once again, Fichte expresses a similar proviso regarding the possibility of reconciling or conceiving of the absolute *Ich* independently of any empirical determination. See:

J.C. Fichte, ‘Lectures concerning the scholar’s vocation, 1794’, in (ed.) trans. Daniel Breazeale, *Early Philosophical Writings*, Ithaca NY; London, Cornell University Press, 1993, p.150.

²⁰ F.C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. VII, Fichte to Nietzsche, London: Search Press, 1975, p.53.

Patrick T. Murray, *The development of German aesthetic theory from Kant to Schiller: a philosophical commentary on Schiller’s ‘Aesthetic Education of Man’ (1795)*, Lewiston NY; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1994, p.97.

and thus of its own existence.²¹ Condition is Person, existing in time.²² In more Kantian terms, this interdependent Person / condition distinction adapts the notions of transcendental and empirical ego. By comparison with much of Schiller's writing, the argument is curiously abstract. However, it provided an analysis of human nature and the human subject that permitted him to define freedom as indeterminacy, or the undetermined, alongside the traditional Kantian idea of freedom as conformity to the moral law. The usefulness of this became clear when he turned directly to the topic of aesthetic appreciation.²³

Letters XII and XIII then introduce the model of reciprocally interacting drives, which is distinctive to the *Aesthetic Letters*. Schiller later combined this with the theory of the unity of Person and condition to create a new aesthetic theory. Like Fichte's philosophy, the theory of drives involves the notion of reciprocal and formative interaction between two elements. The human mind is dominated by two competing and interacting drives, the sense drive and the form drive. The sense drive

²¹ Patrick T. Murray, *The development of German aesthetic theory from Kant to Schiller: a philosophical commentary on Schiller's 'Aesthetic Education of Man' (1795)*, Lewiston NY; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1994, p.96.

Murray points out that individual sentences in Letter XI: §3 and Letter XIII are very close to Fichte's *Science of Knowledge* (1784).

see also: Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XX, §2, p.139. Here the individual becomes a person.

However, Patrick T. Murray, *The development of German aesthetic theory from Kant to Schiller: a philosophical commentary on Schiller's 'Aesthetic Education of Man' (1795)*, Lewiston NY; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1994, p.96. Murray claims that Schiller uses the words 'self', 'Person' and 'Ich' interchangeably, although, strictly speaking, *Person* cannot be instantiated unless situated in *Zustand*. There is also a sense in which Schiller is advocating the development of a better kind of 'self' through the combined sensory and rational input of the aesthetic education, so this is a contentious claim on Murray's part.

²² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIII, §3, p.87.

Since the World is extension in time, ie. change, the perfection of that faculty which connects man with the world will have to consist in maximum changeability and maximum extensity. Since the Person is persistence within change, the perfection of that faculty which is to oppose change will have to be maximum autonomy and maximum intensivity.

²³ see chapter 4 below.

has affinity with inanimate material nature, and also with sensation and appetite. The form drive reasons, reflects, analyses, theorises and makes moral judgements. When these two drives are fully developed and in balance, mankind can fulfil its true potential and operate at a level of excellence. The link between the Person / condition dichotomy and the theory of the drives is that Person is related to or subsumed into the form drive, condition into the sense drive.²⁴

Schiller has thus departed considerably from the Kantian view given in the *Kallias Letters*. He does not relate the sense drive to any Kantian entity, but to condition. Similarly, Person is aligned with the formal drive. The function of condition in this dichotomy is slightly surprising, given that it represents time, which, in Kant, is represented by the schemata. One might have expected Schiller to place the schemata on the side of the form drive, the analytical and organisational force in mankind. But the schemata are never mentioned, and seem to have no rôle according to the *Aesthetic Letters*.²⁵ Applying our knowledge of Kant seemed to help our understanding of the *Kallias Letters*, but now we must reinterpret all the features of the Kantian system in terms of reciprocally interacting drives. Schiller related the sensuous side of mankind not just to the mind, but also to the external world, in that the sense drive has to ‘turn him into matter’. As an aspect of the human mind the sense drive is passive and receptive; but it also ‘is’ world, in the sense that it is what we use as our evidence of the phenomenal world. On the other hand, it is not, and does not in itself provide any empirical knowledge, because it has not been formed by

²⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XII, §1, p.79.

“The business of the sensuous drive: to set man within the limits of time, and to turn him into matter. Not to provide him with matter, because that would presuppose free activity of Person... By matter in this context we understand nothing more than change, or reality that occupies time... This state, which is nothing but time occupied by content, is called sensation, and it is through this alone that physical existence makes itself known.”

²⁵ This is mentioned again in my section on ways of explaining the drives.

the formal drive, which, in turn, corresponds to Person.²⁶ This is a curious mixture of Kant and Fichte, in which something rather like the relationship between the Kantian faculties co-exists with a Fichtean belief that reciprocal determination constitutes our determination in time, and that the outside world is equivalent to resistance to the *Ich*, or Person.

Fichte's brief mentions of aesthetics altered the relationship Kant had identified between aesthetic and conceptual perception.²⁷ For Fichte aesthetic appreciation was not an anomaly, it was mankind's motivation for engaging with the surrounding world in the first place. The aesthetic response was therefore logically prior to any other kind of perception; without it, we would not bother to apply concepts, name objects or become aware of the spatial relationships between objects or of the configuration of their parts in relation to one another. Schiller may have been scathing about Fichte's ignorance of the creative process,²⁸ but found the notion of a drive useful to explain our motivations. One of its drawbacks, however, is that, by enticing the reader to visualise and make analogies, it complicates any attempts to map the extent of Schiller's agreement or disagreement with Kant or Fichte. On the other hand, it enabled Schiller to promote an alternative view of the human mind and its response to externally present beauty.

²⁶ Schiller develops this point further in Letter XIII.

²⁷ Fichte's work on aesthetics was more or less confined to the essays based on his course of popular lectures in Jena, already referred to, ie. 'On the Spirit and the Letter in Philosophy' and 'Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation'.

²⁸ J.C Fichte, 'Letter to Schiller, 27.06.1795', in (ed.) Daniel Breazeale, *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, New York: Cornell, University Press, 1988, p.393.

In this letter Fichte expressed his dismay that Schiller could not understand why he had apparently blurred the distinction between the philosophical spirit and the aesthetic spirit, and had rejected his article for the *Horen*. Fichte later made his belief, which Schiller found so objectionable, that the work of scholar and artist can be equivalent, completely explicit. See his essay:

'On the Nature of the Scholar, and his manifestations in the sphere of freedom, 1805', in (ed.) (tr.) David Simpson, *German aesthetic and literary criticism: Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hegel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p.99.

'The point where the scholar passes into the free artist is the perfecting of the scholar.'

Schiller's human subject is not constituted solely by the operation of the drives. Somewhat belatedly, he tells us that the drives are present in the subject, because the human being has a two-fold nature.²⁹ The drives are 'active in him'.³⁰ What does this mean? We seem to have returned to the world of Kant's transcendental ego. He states, firstly, that the drives are part of a finite mind, which is, in itself, neither matter nor form. This we can presumably amplify as Person operating within condition.³¹ But does this mean that separate drives operate within the unity of themselves? This is just about possible, but somewhat paradoxical. Secondly,

Each of these two primary drives... strives inevitably and according to its nature towards satisfaction; but just because both are necessary, and yet strive towards opposite ends, these two compulsions cancel each other out, and the will maintains a perfect freedom between them. It is, then, the will which acts as a *power* (power being the ground of all reality) vis-à-vis both drives... but neither of these can act as a power against the other.³²

In terms of the bi-fold structure that Schiller has already described, this seems to place the will in a rather ambiguous position. It is presented in this quotation as an independent entity, possibly occupying the middle ground which we shall later see him identify with the play drive.³³ Yet, also, being familiar with Kant, we associate the will with the operation of the practical reason; and, as we have stated, Schiller has placed the mental operations that are equivalent to the practical reason quite definitely in the form drive, which covers our ability to think and decide morally. This suggestion seems to be confirmed further, in that it seems reasonable for the will to

²⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XI; § 1.

³⁰ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XX; § 2. III; § 2.

³¹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIX, §10.

³² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIX, §10, p.135.

³³ see chapter 4 below.

belong on the side of pure Person, free and undetermined as we would expect it to be. Person, as we have seen, however, belongs with the form drive.

Now, in the quotation given above, Schiller appears to be assigning the will some kind of superior, co-ordinating rôle. Perhaps Schiller means us to understand that there is some way in which the form drive can assess the extent to which the drives are balanced or unbalanced. Certainly the sense drive, by definition, would be unable to perform this task. Once a person has achieved a point of equilibrium between the drives, perhaps the form drive, or that aspect of it that we call the will, would be conscious of the existence of a point of balance, and could strive to maintain it by seeking out new sensuous experiences, reflecting upon them and analysing them, thus keeping the drives healthy and strong. However, we have also been told that the drives compete, and Schiller is scathing about those people who are dominated by an over-developed form drive.³⁴ The form drive clearly cannot be trusted to fulfil an adjudicating rôle in the mental activities of mankind. Worries such as this, regarding the exact way in which we should be interpreting Schiller's model have probably underlain the doubts expressed by writers, such as Murray and Schaper,³⁵ about either the coherency of Schiller's thought, or the extent to which he has understood Kant.

However, Schiller relied on Reinhold for much of his knowledge of Kant,³⁶ and his comments about the will seem to be compatible with Reinhold's conception of

³⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIII, §5, p.91; XXIV, §§5, 6, p.177.

³⁵ Eva Schaper, *Studies in Kant's Aesthetics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979.

³⁶ Sabine Röhr, 'Zum Einfluß K.L. Reinholds auf Schillers Kant Rezeption', in (eds.) Martin Bondeli and Wolfgang H. Schrader, *Die Philosophie Karl Leonhard Reinholds, (Fichte Studien Supplementa Band 16)*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003, p.110.

Sabine Röhr, 'Freedom and Autonomy in Schiller', in *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 64, no. 1, January 2003, p.126.

the three-fold activity of the human will.³⁷ Despite Kant's belief in the freedom of the will, he dealt in detail only with the Good Will, which is virtually synonymous with the practical reason. Reinhold, however, believed the will itself to be neutral, not to be identified exclusively with the practical reason. The 'something' in which Schiller says the drives are active is probably that neutral 'Will' that is independent of either drive.³⁸ This overarching Will unifies the thought processes of the individual.

Schiller's drives very loosely correspond to Reinhold's other two functions of the will, *Willkür*, ie. the will to selfishness and sensation, and the will to morality and rationality.³⁹ Free will consists in the ability of the individual's will to operate on a higher level, and decide with which of these kinds of representation it will align itself. The individual faculties of the mind that respectively handle sensation and reason are incapable of restraint or reflection in fulfilling their inherent functions; they simply strive to fulfil their natural functions.⁴⁰

In addition to having situated the two drives within the operation of the will, Schiller tells us that each drive supposedly has its own Subject that in turn has an effect on the whole mind (*Gemüt*).⁴¹ Again, we can explain this by relating Schiller's

³⁷ (Ed.) George de Giovanni & H.S. Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2000, p.101, fn64.

³⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIX: §10, p.135.

³⁹ (Ed.) George de Giovanni & H.S. Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2000, p.102.

⁴⁰ Deric Regin, *Freedom and Dignity: the historical and philosophical thought of Schiller*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965, part I, ch. 3, minimises the influence of Reinhold and stresses the time and effort Schiller expended in grappling with Kant's original texts. Röhr, op. cit., however, fairly convincingly explains the rôle of Reinhold in providing much of Schiller's knowledge of Kant.

⁴¹ Patrick T. Murray, *The development of German aesthetic theory from Kant to Schiller: a philosophical commentary on Schiller's 'Aesthetic Education of Man' (1795)*, Lewiston NY; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1994, p.140.

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIV, §5, p.97.

The word *Gemüt* is first used in this section according to Murray.

position to Reinhold, since Schiller's view of the whole person places the Will, metaphorically speaking, above both drives. Overall, therefore, it is probably more straightforward to compare the rôle Schiller gave the Will and the drives with Reinhold's ideas, rather than trying to preserve Kant's conception of the reason (*Vernunft*), uniting faculties of the subject, since reason, or rationality, supposedly belongs within the operations of the form drive. However, although we can speculate on how he agrees with or differs from Kant, Reinhold or Fichte, in fact, the throwaway reference to the Will in Letter XIX: §10 that we have just discussed provides no real indication of how Schiller's mention of the Will or its freedom should fit into the overall scheme.

Thus far we have more or less been able to uphold the likely coherence of Schiller's position in the *Aesthetic Letters*. What is already coming through clearly in these paragraphs is that Schiller abandoned Kant's view of the human subject as a static and ready-made entity. One effect of the theory of the drives is that human beings are always 'becoming', for better or worse. If undetermined in time or space, *Person* is an aspect of being human about which no existing human being, as an embodied, empirical creature can discover anything more. Its rôle is comparable to Kant's transcendental ego, in that it makes experience possible. However, rather than simply being a theoretical way of enabling us to make sense of the notion of human identity, *Person* also seems intended to encourage us to envisage mankind as an infinity of possible experiences, and may therefore be part of Schiller's answer to the problem of how to reconcile the empirical evidence about what human beings are like with his conviction that they could be better; not just that they could, in individual cases, decide rationally to behave in a morally better way, but that, like the 'graceful' or 'dignified' person, they could desire and foster the apparently natural habit of

leading a more effective moral and aesthetic life, that would include physical activity as well as thought and perception.⁴²

Comparing the theory of drives with Kant's model

The following paragraphs will now try to interpret Schiller's model of two-fold human nature in enough detail to confirm the extent to which Schiller has moved away from Kantianism in this work. If the *Kallias Letters*, in which theoretical and practical reason worked together to perceive beauty, is taken as Schiller's starting point, the *Aesthetic Letters* adapted Kant's model even further, and subsumed both kinds of reason – ie. understanding and practical reason - under the form drive.

Diagram 1⁴³ shows that, in Kant, the practical reason had no place in either perception or the enjoyment of beauty. Diagram 2,⁴⁴ referring to the *Kallias Letters*, shows how Schiller structured his conviction that man's normal perceptual processes must work concurrently with the enjoyment of beauty. By the time of the *Aesthetic Letters*, the whole person is involved in every aspect of human thought and behaviour. Practical reason, sensation and conceptual analysis participate in perception, and also in morality, morally graceful or worthy behaviour and aesthetic appreciation.⁴⁵ As Murray says, Schiller might be accused of over-simplification, in that everything is described in terms of the interaction of sense and form drives,⁴⁶ but Table 1 shows that Schiller was still aware of the many strands that were represented in these drives,

⁴²Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXVII, § 3, p.209. Here he states that physical activity is an integral part of aesthetic freedom.

⁴³ see Appendix.

⁴⁴ see Appendix.

⁴⁵ Their part in aesthetic appreciation is discussed below, in chapter 4.

⁴⁶ Patrick T. Murray, *The development of German aesthetic theory from Kant to Schiller: a philosophical commentary on Schiller's 'Aesthetic Education of Man' (1795)*, Lewiston NY; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1994, p.122.

and he still sometimes used Kantian terms in order to refer to them.⁴⁷ Table 1. shows the various paired terms he associated with the sense / form dichotomy in the course of the *Aesthetic Letters*. Sometimes he used more than one of these pairings alongside each other interchangeably.⁴⁸

Table 1.

sense, or sensuous drive	form, or formal drive
concrete	abstract
bodily / material	mental
passive	active
sensuous	spiritual
diversity (manifold)	unity / unification
content, matter	form
feeling	reason / rationality
condition	Person
perceptual	conceptual

Kant's familiar dichotomy between the objective and the subjective has not been included above. It does not correspond with the contrasts made in table 1. Some of these pairs contrast aspects of the mind, such as feeling and reason, whilst others

⁴⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIII; fn. p.85. We can see here that Schiller uses the feeling / reason, and world of appearances / form dichotomies interchangeably.

Either this shows some confusion, as Murray says, or some more detailed explanation is required.

⁴⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, eg. XVII; § 4, p.119. - reason / feeling; mental / physical;

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XVIII; § 2, p.123. - material world / form; active / passive.

contrast the experience of being a person with the perceived, externally existing, material world. Each dichotomy tends to be accompanied by an assumption that the first of each pair, corresponding with the sense drive, precedes the second in a developmental sense,⁴⁹ though Schiller never regards physical matter as an obstacle to using reason and recognising necessary truths.⁵⁰ We are indeed rational beings with bodies, as Kant also said, so animal inclinations always have to be taken into account, although, as Schiller said in *Anmut und Würde*, we should leave objects and animals to do what they are best at, and concentrate on what humans do best.⁵¹

How Schiller is able to claim that the sense drive is both developmentally lower than the form drive and equally important is illustrated as follows: In an animal, or in the uncultivated and savage man, or in the very young baby, perception is raw, manifold and unformed, and the creature has no sense of self. It is unable to distinguish between itself and its perceptions, or between itself and the outside world. Gradually, however, the form drive comes into action.⁵² This holds with reference to living creation as a hierarchy of increasingly complex organisms, and also to the changes taking place in a human lifetime. Earlier in life, the sensuous drive is stronger than the form drive, because sensation precedes consciousness. But the growth of the form drive makes consciousness and reflection possible, and forms the individual into

⁴⁹ Although Schiller takes constant pains to assure us that mankind is essentially an amalgam of sense and reason, hence the importance of striking the right balance, see letter XXVI which portrays the development of the form drive as a progressive developmental step in mankind, and letter XXVII, §11, which mentions the usefulness of beauty in covering up the more distasteful aspects of physical existence.

⁵⁰ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIII; fn. §2, p.89.

⁵¹ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit and Anmut und Würde*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.76.

⁵² see also Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XVII; § 4. reason / feeling; mental / physical; & XVIII; § 2. material world / form; active / passive.

a complete, conscious person, a (Kantian) subject. Thus, the sense drive is not only lower, but also more fundamental, and, thus, just as important as the form drive.

In the opening paragraphs of this chapter we saw that analysis of how individuals are composed of *Person* and *Zustand* came after a stylised historical and anthropological account of the origins of modern society. Table 2. below summarises the main ways in which Schiller observed sense and form drives at work.

Table 2.

method of analysis	sense drive exhibits itself as	form drive exhibits itself as
anthropological	savage society	civilised society
historical	primitive, ancient humanity	modern human society
psychological	uneducated individual	educated individual
developmental	baby	adult
metaphysical	condition (ie. the conditioned, determined)	Person (ie. the unconditioned, undetermined)
analytical	raw material of perception	conceptualisation

Thus, in Schiller's historical account of the nature of mankind and the theory of the drives, both cultural and personal improvement takes place while folk groupings move from savagery to civilisation. However, the same process also takes place continuously in any given society, because, side by side, some people are more savage, others more civilised than the rest; more importantly, with the right encouragement, even the savages can improve and gradually develop their form drive. However, Schiller did not explain why parallel developments occur within the individual and in society, and which, if either explanation takes precedence. He appears to presume that his micro and macro explanations interact and confirm each

other. A little later in the century this kind of presupposition would be examined more carefully, for instance, as Hölderlin devised his integrated, more organic metaphysical model of mankind's place in the cosmos,⁵³ and as Friedrich Schlegel celebrated the piecemeal patterns of reality that typified the human environment and were largely manifested in historical change.⁵⁴

Despite the loose ends that unavoidably remain, the conception of human drives possibly improves on Kant in two ways. The first is that it resolves Schiller's doubts about Kant's notion of the *Gemeinsinn*, by accounting for both social generalisation and individual uniqueness. The second relates to a question that had troubled the philosophical world in general, including both Reinhold and Fichte, namely, the wish to avoid an infinite regress. They sought a more fundamental groundwork for the transcendental deduction, because Kant supposedly did not explain how his theory could motivate or co-ordinate the workings of the human being. However, the theory of sustained, self-generated, opposing drives, as Schiller conceived them, structures, creates, develops and improves the human being, simply by repeated and constant action, while accommodating variations between one person and another.⁵⁵ By finding some core explanation that accepted diversity and change, Schiller avoided these problems, and even accounted for the fact that not all human adaptations appear to be good.

At the same time, Schiller's use of the concept of the neutral will shows that he still believed there to be a unified self present independently of the additional unifying effects that our next chapter shows are produced by an aesthetic education. Schiller's general philosophy mainly emphasised how to improve and complete

⁵³ see chapters 6 – 9.

⁵⁴ see chapters 10 – 12.

⁵⁵ eg. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, V, §5, p.27.

human beings who do not use all their abilities. The *Aesthetic Letters* advocates ways of developing people, whose nature is well-balanced between physical and intellectual capabilities, who can make judgements of taste, recognise and appreciate beauty, or have an aesthetic sense, and this is what we shall now go on to examine. Schiller claimed that Kantian principles were the foundation of his work,⁵⁶ and, while this was true, this chapter has demonstrated that, by the time he wrote the *Aesthetic Letters*, he had already set up a theory that was largely independent of Kant's original position.

⁵⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, I; §3, p.3.

CHAPTER 4

THE THEORY OF AESTHETICS THAT SCHILLER BASED ON HIS GENERAL PHILOSOPHY

The previous chapter set out Schiller's theory of human nature and the individual mind. This chapter will show how, from this, he developed a new aesthetic theory that considerably adapted his surviving connection with Kant, and tried to combine a confident belief in our ability to recognise true beauty with an acceptance of ongoing change and variation. First, we show the relevance of Schiller's theory of drives to this aesthetic theory. The second half of the chapter considers how helpful Kant is for understanding Schiller's aesthetics in the *Aesthetics Letters*. Readers will probably conclude that Schiller was now working within his own framework, although Kant still had significant 'historical' importance.

Things are perceived when the form drive takes content from the sense drive and forcibly shapes and organises it.¹ From Schiller's account of how individuals develop, we could infer that a baby, for example, experiences only unstructured sensations during its earliest days. As the form drive develops, it becomes strong enough to overcome the resistance of the child's sense drive, take these sensations, and form them into perceived objects. It then becomes strong enough for the child to recognise and remember connections and patterns among objects, and so on, until the child whose form drive has become extremely strong is eventually, at maturity, able to manipulate complex abstract mathematical formulae that may or may not have practical applications in the physical world. Now we shall see how this progression relates to aesthetic appreciation.

¹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIX: §§2, 3, p.129.

The transfer or movement of physical-sensuous and mental-rational activity works in two directions, both from the sensuous to the formal, and, as the powers of reason become more developed, reciprocally back in the direction of the sense drive, as the two drives vie for supremacy. The constant process of reciprocal action develops both drives, and once they are maximally strong and equally balanced, mankind can fulfil its true potential. However, this would be an ideal condition,

Something infinite, to which in the course of time he can approximate ever more closely, but without ever being able to reach it.²

Nevertheless, mankind can develop the drives to provide a stable level of equilibrium sufficient to operate as a drive in its own right, known as the play drive. In the course of this development points of temporary balance between sense and form drives can also occur, creating a weak and transient play drive. Since, metaphorically speaking, the two basic drives are greedy, each trying to seize whatever is present in the other, while retaining what they already own, the play drive originates in pressure, tension, or conflict. Crucially, we therefore need an act of reason, or Will, to relax the senses and prevent them from dominating us. Similarly, we need a strong enough sense drive to prevent the form drive from blunting our feelings.³ If these conditions are fulfilled, pressures are equal and sustained, creating an experience of harmony and free play, ‘play’ being a term borrowed and familiar to us from Lessing’s *Laocoön* and Kant’s *Third Critique*.⁴

² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIV: §1, p.95.

This idea reappears in the Preface to the penultimate version of Hölderlin’s *Hyperion*, in which man’s constant search for the perfection of Being is described as an ‘endless approximation’. See:

‘Vorrede der vorletzten Fassung von *Hyperion*’, in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, „Hyperion“*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.157.

³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIV: §6, p.97.

⁴ Frederick Beiser, *Schiller as philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.142.

Following Kant's theory of the categories,⁵ Schiller then identifies a synthesising concept capable of uniting, containing and absorbing the oppositions that the drives represent: matter and form, passivity and activity, feeling and reason, without destroying their distinctive rôles.⁶ Since the play drive has been defined as the point of harmony between the material content of mankind's sensuous side (whose object is referred to at this point as 'life') and his rational, formative side (whose object is 'form'), the play drive provides this concept, and is actually 'living form',⁷ which has an aesthetic rôle. The expression 'living form' recalls the apparent autonomy of beautiful objects in the *Kallias Letters*, which seemed to have given form to their own content.

...*living form*: a concept serving to designate all the aesthetic qualities of phenomena and, in a word, what in the widest sense of the term we call *beauty*.⁸

Despite some ambiguity in Schiller's description of the sense drive, identified sometimes with 'world', and sometimes with mental sensation, the main difference between the account in the *Kallias Letters* and living form seems to be that living form is also a condition of mankind, not merely of perceived objects.⁹ The purpose of

Beiser identifies the connection with Lessing. However, he also (p.143) claims that Ramdohr exercised a powerful influence, through his book, *Charis*. However, although Schiller tells Goethe, in the letter referred to by Beiser (letter 9, 07.09.1794), that he has found some of the ideas in *Charis* useful, he was also wary of Ramdohr, mainly because of the fundamental aesthetic rôle he ascribed to the sex drive, or so it seems from Schiller's further comments to Goethe (see letter 11, 12.09.1794).

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *A Critique of Pure Reason*, (ed.) trans. F. Max Müller, Garden City NY: Anchor Doubleday, 1966, B110, p.64.

⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XVIII; § 4, p.125.

⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XV: §2, p.101.

⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XV: §2, p.101.

⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XV: §3, p.101:

A block of marble, though it is and remains lifeless, can nevertheless, thanks to the architect or the sculptor, become living form; and a human being, though he may live and have form, is far from being on that account a living form... Only when his form lives in our feeling and his life takes on form in



social education should therefore be to realise this condition, encouraging individuals and society to develop a play drive that is as strong as possible. In that this represents the best balance between rationality and feeling, we are also reminded of *Anmut und Würde*, where the graceful person, the *schöne Seele*, would thus now seem to be a person in whom the sense and formal drives are balanced in perfect harmony,¹⁰ ‘since in contemplation of the beautiful, the psyche finds itself in a happy medium between the realm of law and the sphere of physical exigency.’¹¹

However, like the sense and form drives, the play drive develops and works in more than one way. Firstly, it is unavoidable that we must make use of the play drive whenever we pass from raw sensation to conceptual thought (an analytical explanation), but secondly, there is a sense in which the play drive is superior to the other drives, and can flourish only as a later, non-primitive development (an anthropological explanation), or after some exceptional effort, among well-rounded, fully educated people (a psychological explanation).¹² Murray could not reconcile

our understanding, does he become living form; and this will always be the case whenever we adjudge him beautiful.

¹⁰ Frederick Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.141.

Savile, in Anthony Savile, *Aesthetic Reconstructions*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, p.198, is not satisfied that Schiller really makes or proves his point. Schiller’s position seems to depend on there being an identity between play drive, beauty and aesthetic condition. I admit that, in my reading of Schiller, I am presuming that Schiller could be regarding them as different ways of interpreting the same cluster of observations about human nature. He also tells us (see chapter 5 below) that ‘taste’ is equivalent to the aesthetic mode of perception.

Savile’s specific doubt is that Schiller does not prove that beauty is a necessary condition of being human. However, perhaps Schiller means that, by failing to appreciate beauty, a person demonstrates his low level of development, and thus his failure to qualify for membership of the human race. His anthropological description of humanity uses delight in ornamentation to illustrate the threshold between animal existence and humanity. Admittedly, it would be generous of us to defend Schiller in this way, because this is not a proof as such. It is merely suggestive of the plausibility of what he says. Despite his apparent desire to demonstrate his theory through argument, Schiller probably relies also on suggestive plausibilities. His method is not entirely Kantian.

¹¹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XV: §5, p.105.

¹² This seems to be a fair conclusion to draw from XXIII: § 5.

these claims, and neither, apparently, could Schiller's friend Körner.¹³ Wilkinson suggests Schiller was using 'chiasmus',¹⁴ alternating pairs of contrasting terms, resolved successively into a higher third term.¹⁵ This might indicate a model into which Schiller's comments would fit, though it is unfortunately a rhetorical, rather than logical form of explanation. It would suggest that the reciprocal action between the drives enables our conscious reinforcement of the middle term, the play drive, by thinking and behaving in ways that strengthen or restrain both drives. We may do this by exposing ourselves to more vivid and varied sensuous experience, which strengthens the sense drive, or engaging in more intense intellectual activity, which strengthens the form drive. As the drives approach full, equal strength, the flow of activity between them slows, but the equilibrium of the play drive has become stronger, more lasting and stable. We could thus say that this point of balance is occurring at a 'higher' level. After this, says Schiller, by a constant process of refinement, the more fully and frequently we experience the state of harmony, the better equipped we are to operate in the moral realm. Improved moral capacity would represent a movement back towards the sphere of the form drive, where the ability to make moral judgements is situated, but once again, we would be at a higher level.¹⁶

¹³ Patrick T. Murray, *The development of German aesthetic theory from Kant to Schiller: a philosophical commentary on Schiller's 'Aesthetic Education of Man' (1795)*, Lewiston NY; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1994, p.227, fn. 8.

¹⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, intro. p.lxxxviii.

'the progressive refinement, or ennoblement of human behaviour: a scale ascending stepwise... each synthesis open-ended into the one above it'.

¹⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, intro. pp. lxxviii – lxxxi.

Unfortunately, their defence of this suggestion does not help us analyse the structure of Schiller's argument, as they relate it only to his rhetorical style rather than to content or argument. I shall not use their triads of terms and their pyramidal diagrams, but believe it is important to retain their imagery of continual, progressive upward change.

¹⁶ Even this suggestion raises questions that I have attempted to illustrate, but cannot resolve, in tables 3 and 4 below. Schiller mentions morality in the context of both freedom and the form drive. As we have said, the form drive is not supposed to represent freedom. Schiller has told us that the Will is free,

However, perhaps this explanation only adds further to Schiller's 'speculative psychology'.¹⁷ It is only an attempt to add some theoretical justification to the suggestion of chiasmus, in the absence of an explicit explanation by Schiller himself.

We now return to Schiller's earlier association between morality and beauty.

The idea may have come initially from Kant's discussion of sublimity, rather than of beauty.

In fact, without the development of moral ideas, that which we, prepared by culture, call sublime will appear merely repellent to the unrefined person.¹⁸

Admittedly, Kant is here advocating morality as a preparation for a kind of aesthetic experience, but perhaps Schiller re-examined this moral / sublime relationship with the possibility of reciprocity in mind. Since beauty has even a potential link with morality, encouragement of the right kind of education or cultural experience, reinforced by means of music, the visual arts and great literature, has an ability to change the human world. Thus, although

beauty produces no particular result whatsoever, neither for the understanding, nor for the will. It accomplishes no particular purpose, neither intellectual nor moral.¹⁹

beauty has opened an area of mental indeterminacy, where no single side of human nature dominates, so that the individual faces a new possibility of freedom. If we continue to regard freedom, not simply as Kantian self-determination in conformity

and adjudicates between the drives, thus agreeing with Reinhold. Perhaps Schiller wishes to distinguish between knowledge of or adherence to a moral rule (form drive), and the ability to understand and freely accept – or reject - moral principles (free Will).

¹⁷ Patrick T. Murray, *The development of German aesthetic theory from Kant to Schiller: a philosophical commentary on Schiller's 'Aesthetic Education of Man' (1795)*, Lewiston NY; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1994, p.103.

Murray used the expression 'speculative psychology' originally with reference to the way Schiller prevaricates in letters XI, XIII and XXVII about whether the sense drive is equivalent to time, which makes the worldly existence of mankind possible by conditioning pure Person, whether it is a physiological part of the human being, or whether it is the mental faculty that interacts (like the Kantian sensibility) with rationality during perception.

¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §29, 5:265, p.148.

¹⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXI; §4, p.147.

with the moral law, but also, as Schiller often does, as the condition of not being determined, or limited,²⁰ then the equilibrium between the inner drives is also a point at which the human being is undetermined. The play drive is free of all compulsion (sense drive) or determination (form drive). Until the development of his aesthetic play drive, the individual was always dominated by either the material world or by intellectual strivings. Any freedom of will, choice or action he might have thought he possessed was illusory.

Before Schiller reached the point of defining the play drive for us, he had already introduced us to another way in which we can be free of determination. The Person / condition dichotomy, outlined above,²¹ becomes relevant to the aesthetic condition. As potential, as *Person*, logically prior to our being situated in condition, mankind is pure indeterminacy, an empty infinity. The aesthetic condition represented by our experience of the play drive, however, is a real counterpart to this condition, an infinity filled with content.²² Uniquely, in this condition of aesthetic indeterminacy, free of domination by his own drives, though filled with them both in their full strength,²³ mankind has an infinite and completely free choice as to whether or how to act, and thus determine himself.²⁴ He can use the sensuous material at his disposal to carry out some finite rational or practical task; he can make, or refuse to make, a

²⁰ see chapters 1 and 2 above.

²¹ see chapter 3.

²² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXI; §3, p.145.

²³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XX; §4, p.141.

²⁴ Jeffrey Barnouw, '»Der Trieb, bestimmt zu werden« Hölderlin, Schiller und Schelling als Antwort auf Fichte (Aufzug)', in (ed.) Jürgen Bolten, *Schiller Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984, p.261, takes this to be Schiller's definition of the imagination, a definition formed in response to Fichte's contrast between the imagination as absolute activity bringing about an exchange (ie. *Wechsel*), and absolute activity itself. Nevertheless, although the Fichtean dimension of this section of the *Aesthetic Letters* is perceptible, Schiller himself does not identify the imagination with the aesthetic condition or state of mind.

moral decision; he can contemplate or engage with the aesthetic qualities of whatever is confronting him. This is how Schiller can claim that aesthetic experience, while not moral in itself, prepares us for morality and can develop our moral sense. Thus, Schiller has now provided some justification for his much quoted, but slightly cryptic tag,

...because it is only through beauty that man makes his way to freedom.²⁵

Letter XIV has already prepared us for the need to decide how to use our play drive. Full development of mankind's two drives is a task set for us by our reason.

Such reciprocal relation between the two drives is, admittedly, but a task enjoined on us by Reason... It is in the most precise sense of the word, *the Idea of his Human Nature*,...

And, then, most significantly, consciousness of this task of reason will 'serve him as a manifestation of the infinite'.²⁶ Schiller means that, as the interaction between the drives begins to spark, we apprehend that the sphere of the play drive is itself an experience of the undetermined, and reveals the many possibilities open to a complete

²⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, II, p.9.

This is Wilkinson and Willoughby's translation. The quotation is perhaps better known in its more literal translation : 'It is only through Beauty that we walk to freedom.'

Set into the context of his own arguments, this belief is also central to the work of Hölderlin. (See below, chapter 9.) The consequences of inner indeterminacy will arguably re-emerge also in Schlegel's thought, in a form more adapted to the appreciation of literature. He noted with approval the many possible ways in which a perceptive reader can read and reinterpret great literary work. (See below, chapter 12.)

David Simpson, *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry*, London: Macmillan, 1979, pp.178, 179, suggests that these thoughts of Schiller provide one of the earliest grounds for the Romantic and post-Romantic belief in the inadequacy of any poet's intention to communicate unerringly with an audience, and in the reader's open-ended ability to re-interpret any text.

²⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIV:2, p.95.

There is a strong tension here within Schiller's apparently simple explanation, between the reason, a competitive, analytic component of the form drive, and the reason, which can apparently prescribe tasks for the application of the play drive. The explanation may perhaps lie in a distinction, retained from Kantian theory, between the theoretical reason and the transcendental power of reason. It may also be explicable through Reinhold's influence, as a presumed distinction between the reason, and the rationality of the neutral Will, ie. that which enables us to make choices, for better or worse. Although these are both possibilities, after careful study, I believe this is one of the tensions in Schiller's work that we have to accept, and cannot explain away.

and whole sensuous-rational being. The moment of aesthetic judgement, therefore, is a moment, not just of the aesthetic appreciation of, for example, an object, but also, a moment of full self-knowledge by means of which mankind can metaphorically rise above the dryness of the intellectual and the mess of the physical world. Beauty and the ability to appreciate it encourage 'sensuous man' to see that life is more than the mere satisfaction of feeling, and remind 'spiritual man' of the world of the senses.²⁷ For Schiller these conclusions seemed both philosophically sound and intuitively acceptable.²⁸

Although Schiller's metaphysics is unlike that of Friedrich Hölderlin, the idea that there is a point of harmony at which a human being can free itself, not just from external compulsion but also from slavery to inner determinants was one that endured, and has importance in Hölderlin's work.²⁹ Schiller's model leaves readers with some uncertainties as to how it works, but recognisably sets up a continuing cycle that is not inevitable, but one for which we should strive. The move from the appreciation of beauty to the improved ability to make moral judgements, in particular, is not guaranteed. Possession of a strong play drive is a necessary but not sufficient condition for moral excellence. It gives man the chance to be what he ought to be. It

²⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XVIII; § 1, p.124.

At this point I gloss over Schiller's contentious mention of relaxing beauty and energetic beauty. Relaxing or melting beauty calms sensuous man. Energetic beauty enlivens or tenses spiritual man. At the end of Letter XVI Schiller states that he will examine each in turn, and from this derive the overall definition of beauty. Since he does not carry out this intention, we simply have to accept that beauty can fulfil both these purposes. He appears to discuss only melting beauty. Miller made the once influential suggestion that energetic beauty was actually the sublime. Various objections to this have been raised, however, for instance, by both Beiser and Frank.

R.D. Miller, *Schiller and the ideal of freedom: a study of Schiller's philosophical works with chapters on Kant*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p.115..

²⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XVIII; §§ 2, 3, p.124.

In these sections, Schiller also writes of the capacity for beauty to bridge the gap between the two human drives and encourage the development of whichever is the feebler drive.

²⁹ see chapter 8 below.

opens possibilities, but what he makes of them depends on how he uses his own will.³⁰

A final comparison with Kant

Although we have acknowledged that several thinkers influenced what Schiller wrote, and although the account Schiller gives us in the *Aesthetic Letters* is new, his avowed debt to Kant encourages us to continue making comparisons with Kant. The main similarities are still the recognition of aesthetic free play, and the belief that aesthetic judgement takes place independently of conceptualisation. By equating the play drive with the state of mind in which we can appreciate beauty, Schiller shows the indeterminateness and ambiguity of aesthetic appreciation, lying somewhere between raw nature and intellectual analysis. It is no longer immediately obvious, however, how this relates to Kant. Therefore, we shall examine some possible, but ultimately false ways of doing this, as we build towards the most likely version.³¹ First, as a point of reference, I shall present some further comments concerning Kant's views on aesthetic judgement in the *Third Critique*. (see also Diagram 1). Then we can compare possible ways in which Schiller might, or might not, still be using Kant's model.

Human reason, in Kant, constantly operates on the phenomena or objects of which we gain empirical knowledge, as it seeks the unconditioned, hence our constant search for more generalised concepts or explanations for our observations and experiences. Knowledge of the Categorical Imperative would be an example of the kind of self-justifying principle the reason is ultimately trying to find. This is the so-called 'regulative' function of pure reason, by means of which the noumenal world of

³⁰ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIX: §10, p.135.

³¹ The in-text references below are to the Appendix, Diagrams 1- 5.

reason can interact with the phenomenal world of the understanding and sensibility. In this sense the transcendental power of reason, or more generally, the noumenal world, is constantly active, underlies and is relevant to daily life. Despite this, however, it is not directly relevant to aesthetic judgement, according to Kant. Aesthetic judgement occurs at a lower level than the practical reason, and in fact also at a slightly lower level than the conceptualising activity of the theoretical understanding. There is thus no interface between aesthetic judgement and the noumenal, except perhaps in three special cases. Firstly, for instance, if we wish to evaluate the value of an aesthetic judgement; secondly, in the expression of the ineffable aesthetic ideas of reason, by making use of the allegorical abilities of the practical reason; thirdly, when we presuppose the purposiveness of nature, and judge it according to this ascribed criterion.

In our first possible interpretation of Schiller, we might identify the sense drive with the complex made up, in Kant, of the imagination, sensible intuitions, sensibility and sensation (Diagram 3). This would leave the formal drive as covering the understanding and its concepts, though not, as pointed out already, the schemata.³² Thus, perceptual judgement would take place once the sense drive had handed its sensation over to the formal drive for conceptualisation. This scheme does not allot a place to the practical reason (or Will, in Kant's sense) or the transcendental ego, however. There is some initial plausibility in this. We can try to map Kant's system onto Schiller's drives, as shown in table 3. Note that our previous references to the influence of Reinhold's conception of the will has probably accounted already for the ambiguous position of the last three terms.

³² see chapter 3 above.

Table 3: How Kant's theory of the mind relates to Schiller's theory of drives

Kant		Schiller
imagination	} work together	sense drive
sensible intuitions		“
sensibility		“
sensation		“
theoretical reason	} work together	form drive
understanding		“
concepts		“
practical reason	} work together	“
moral judgement		“
freedom		form drive + ambiguous position
will		“
schemata, produced by imagination		[ambiguous position, probably sense drive]

In Kant, the aesthetic reflective judgement takes place in circumstances where the imagination has derived some appearance from sensible intuitions, but the understanding has not applied any concepts to this material. This represents a pleasurable moment of free play among the cognitive powers. We could draw a parallel between this process and Schiller's description of a point of balance between the simultaneously reciprocating and competing drives, neither of which succeeds in gaining control of either specific sense experience or its conceptualisation. This is the moment of tension that constitutes the play drive. P.T. Murray regards the activity of free play as evidence that Schiller agreed with Kant's description of where and how the appreciation or identification of beauty takes place, though he had simplified

Kant's account of the faculties.³³ However, in other respects the two theories do not match so conveniently. To Kant, the beautiful was 'the effect resulting from the free play of our cognitive powers'.³⁴ Schiller, however, involved the practical reason alongside the cognitive powers while the drives are interacting, and as raw data (sense drive) are transformed (form drive) into experience, objects or reactions.

Remembering what Schiller wrote in the *Kallias Letters*, it is unlikely that the form drive can be equated with either the theoretical reason or understanding. There the practical reason directly perceived the perfectly harmonised form and content of the beautiful object. The object has a semblance of autonomy to which a truly autonomous being can respond. Saying this would support the idea that, in the *Aesthetic Letters*, the play drive, where the aesthetic judgement is made, is different from and inferior to, the practical reason (see Diagram 5). Nevertheless, it would be an oversimplification to say that, by occupying an intermediate position between the sensuous and the formal, the aesthetic is a bridge between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. Firstly, Schiller nowhere suggests that the sense drive alone can fulfil all the creative phenomenal tasks of Kantian perception. Secondly, although the form drive can impact on the world, in the same way that the practical reason motivates us to try and change the world, if it were to dominate a person or society, it would have adverse effects. Therefore, while being identified with the inner life, and hence the rational side of a human being, it cannot be relied on alone to produce morality.

³³ Patrick T. Murray, *The development of German aesthetic theory from Kant to Schiller: a philosophical commentary on Schiller's 'Aesthetic Education of Man' (1795)*, Lewiston NY; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1994, pp.111, 122.

³⁴Frederick C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, Vol. 6, Wolff to Kant*, London: Search Press, 1975, p. 362.

Any Kantian analysis is thus not straightforward, especially when we consider the other terms that are matched to the drives.

Table 4: Additional terms that Schiller relates to the drives

Sensuous drive	Formal drive	Play drive
condition	person	
changeable (time)	constant (outside time)	
determined	undetermined [ambiguous whether this belongs here]	belongs also to the play drive
	free [ditto]	ditto
	moral [ditto]	ditto
		relaxing beauty
		energetic beauty
		balance / equilibrium
		harmony
		free play

Taken together with Table 3 above, this shows that some of Schiller's dichotomies, such as freedom, and the Good Will, match, not Kant's imagination / understanding distinction, but the phenomenal / noumenal distinction. When using the play drive, the human mind is undetermined; it would seem to have attained the condition for which Kant said the reason strives, yet the practical reason and morality lie in the form drive, and Kant did not envisage the aesthetic reflective judgement as taking place in the interface between the noumenal and phenomenal. (see also Diagrams 1 and 4).

Perhaps Schiller has ignored the understanding, as having no rôle in the free play of aesthetic perception. However, Kant identifies two ways in which the aesthetic can be regarded as a failure to conceptualise, the second of which involves a link between the

phenomenal and noumenal, firstly, when the passive perception of sensuous beauty is not conceptualised by the understanding, and secondly, when rational ideas are too complex or indeterminate to be conceptualised adequately - the ineffable and the sublime.³⁵ We have to express aesthetic ideas of this kind as images, by means of analogy, allegory and metaphor, making use of the practical reason. 'Beauty... can in general be called the *expression* of aesthetic ideas.'³⁶ Many such ideas permeate our language, and have been absorbed into our everyday discourse,³⁷ but they are also, more obviously, expressed artistically, for instance as in Kant's famous example of Jupiter's eagle.³⁸ Admittedly Kant's discussion deals here with our inability to express ideas conceptually, whereas Schiller seems to be discussing our receptivity to beauty, but since the play drive encompasses freedom, moral improvement and indeterminability, he may have found this section of the *Third Critique* useful.³⁹ The aesthetic ideas that we try to represent are 'representations of the imagination', 'as a cognitive faculty' but they 'strive towards something lying beyond the bounds of experience, and thus seek to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason (of intellectual ideas)'. 'No concept can be fully adequate to them', all of which suggests that they are transcendently present simply in our rationality, not specifically in our

³⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (tr.) Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §49, 5: 314, pp.192, 193.

³⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (tr.) Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §51, 5: 314, p.197.

³⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (tr.) Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §59, 5: 314, p.226.

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (tr.) Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §49, 5: 314, p.193.

³⁹ Treating Kant's discussions of so-called rational (handmill / despotism analogy) and aesthetic (Jupiter's eagle) ideas as if they were one may be elliptical, but seems reasonable since the imaginative ingenuity that produces the thought-provoking imagery that he calls 'aesthetic' is called into play only in the service of the reason that finds itself without a sufficient conceptual means for expressing an abstract, rational idea.

For an opposing view, see:

Kirk Pillow, 'Jupiter's Eagle and the Despot's Hand Mill: Two Views on Metaphor in Kant', in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 59, no.2 (Spring 2001), esp. pp.202, 206.

understanding or practical reason. If we try to express them, we attempt to retrieve them from the presupposed, noumenal structures of our thought.

So far as a writer like Schiller was concerned, however, the use of imagery to represent ideas was his *raison d'être*. He had to translate ideas into something accessible to his readers, but which he nevertheless recognised would, as Kant said

occasion much thinking, though without it being possible for any determinate thought, ie. *concept* to be adequate to it, which consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible⁴⁰

At the same time, he had to know what it was to experience and judge beauty, a human capacity without which his creative work was in vain. From Schiller's correspondence with Körner we know of his dissatisfaction with the idea of a *Gemeinsinn*,⁴¹ by means of which Kant thought we could generalise among individuals. Acknowledgement of a *Gemeinsinn* made aesthetic activity too subjective, contrary to Kant's and Schiller's hopes for a more scientific theory. In the *Aesthetic Letters*, by referring to the interaction of the drives, he has been able to avoid postulating its existence, and yet explain the common response among observers of beauty, and the ability of an artist to predict an audience response. However, it seems he no longer regarded the objective definition of beauty as his primary aim, since he has not pursued his earlier interest in siting beauty in the objective world.⁴²

If Schiller's interpretation of Kant in the *Aesthetic Letters* at first seemed ambiguous, it is thus because he had abandoned Kant, in order to integrate his explanation for our relationship to aesthetic ideas, which supposedly originates at the

⁴⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (tr.) Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §49, 5: 314, pp.192.

⁴¹ Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.50.

⁴² Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.75.

noumenal level, with an account of our relationship to beautiful objects that Kant thought took place at the interface between understanding and imagination. Schiller's solution is to analyse the human mind in his own way. He employs perceptual and rational features that Kant had already recognised as constitutive of the human mind, but re-groups them. The content remains similar, but the structure has been redrawn, sometimes in ways that oblige us to accept a certain lack of clarity. However, if we wish temporarily to preserve a Kantian terminology, it ultimately does appear that when the sensuous and the formal interact, and when the third drive, the play drive, is generated, there is a broad sense in which a move between the phenomenal and noumenal has taken place, in that the play drive is a state of undetermined freedom that will enable us to progress as moral beings.

Beyond merely changing the structure of Kant's analysis, Schiller has furthermore introduced notions of productive conflict and competition into aesthetics, in place of calm, Kantian contemplation, despite the fact that both men identify a calm endpoint of free play and pleasurable harmony. Behler goes so far as to regard Schiller's apparent emphasis on harmony and balance, as a mere mask that barely conceals the underlying violence of his conception. The aesthetic educational process that would bring mankind into harmony with itself is 'The Theatre of Sublime Cruelty'.⁴³ Interesting though Behler's interpretation is, it conflicts with Schiller's consistent contention in both the *Aesthetic Letters* and *Anmut und Würde* that suppression or external control of the human psyche are unstable and ineffective means of developing human potential. Inclination and law must genuinely coincide. Form drive and sense drives must do so too. Admittedly, Behler seems to class any means, including persuasion, by which a creature could be brought to change its mind

⁴³ Constantin Behler, *Nostalgic Teleology: Friedrich Schiller and the Schemata of Aesthetic Humanism*, Bern; Berlin etc: Peter Lang, 1995, ch.3, p.183.

or behaviour, as cruelty or violence. Schiller's ambivalence towards the rôle of nature might possibly encourage this view. He wished to change an existing nature, whether it might be the animal-like savage of primitive, tribal society, or the cold intellectual of eighteenth century Germany, in the name of an ideal human nature. This means that Schiller's desired manipulation of human nature, however underhand, disguised or sugar-coated it may be, is intended nevertheless to be complete. Perhaps Behler sees this process as being something akin to brain-washing. In any case he questions, possibly, whether the aesthetic education would be completely ethical, and, certainly, whether the overall process would be as pleasant and painless as Schiller leads us to believe.

Schiller's attempts to distinguish between actual, possible and ideal human natures, between the good and the distorted, between what we might call givens and becomings, the real and the potential, are factors that may seem to invite criticisms such as Behler's. They also emerge in both this chapter and the last as significant ways in which he came to differ from Kant. However, we have already seen in our discussion of the *Kallias Letters* that Schiller accepted that beauty could be freedom in appearance, and that the actor could, in a sense, both be and not be Hamlet.⁴⁴ It is almost an extension of the indeterminate free play characteristic of Kant's aesthetics that permits Schiller to conceive of a human as being at once weak and primitive (in fact) and capable of great creative and moral projects (in the right circumstances). As we examine the implications of Schiller's mature aesthetic theory for art and the artist in our next chapter, we shall see that, while still using some Kantian concepts, Schiller provides a fuller account than Kant of what an artist does, and what art

⁴⁴ see chapter 5 below.

achieves. In the form of free semblance, and later, the sentimental, we shall also see how the ambivalence we have already noted is central to Schiller's view of art.

CHAPTER 5

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ART OF FRIEDRICH SCHILLER'S AESTHETIC THEORY

This chapter firstly discusses how the essays already reviewed contribute to Schiller's ideas about the nature and value of artistic creativity. In addition, a fourth essay, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*,¹ is examined. *Naïve and Sentimental* completes Schiller's aesthetic theory and illustrates how he applies his ideas. It emphasises how culture influences poetry, and confirms that Schiller worked with a perfectible image of human nature, not Kant's fixed and universal subject. Furthermore, from this conception that humanity is still in a state of development came an aesthetic position that relates to ideas of Hölderlin and Schlegel, that appear in our later chapters.

The *Kallias Letters* defined beauty as a harmony arising from the apparent inner composition of any object, expressible by saying that the material content of the object matches, harmonises or is in perfect balance with its form, shape, manner of expression or appearance. Clearly, an inanimate object would have no choice in this. It is just so, part of its nature, though it may well appear as if the object had acted spontaneously and formed itself. This is true of both naturally occurring objects and of works of art constructed by humans. Humanly created works of art that are not beautiful have a forced and awkward appearance. For example, it may look as if their content has somehow been damaged or distorted to produce the form in which they

¹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, trans. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981. Hereafter referred to in text as *Naïve and Sentimental*.

References have been made to this translated English language edition, since it appears to provide a good quality reading. The most easily obtainable, reliable German edition is:

Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005. (based on the Schiller Nationalausgabe, 1962.)

are presented to the public; or the artist's physical efforts and supposedly creative techniques may be too obvious and distracting to the viewer, reader or listener.

Schiller illustrates this by reference to the stage. The excellent actor's identity is completely forgotten as he immerses himself in his part. For the audience, he has become Hamlet, though the spectators cannot for one moment forget they are sitting in a theatre. This is the freedom in appearance which has an affinity with deception, but by which no one's practical reason is fooled. Content and form blend invisibly. Another actor tries his best; his performance has good points; but the audience can see him trying. He gives them a good understanding of the play and the character, but there is something clumsy in the performance, regardless of its technical excellence. Content and form are not in complete agreement. Finally, the weak actor, whatever part he plays, is visibly still himself on stage. The content, ie. his words and actions, is unformed. No illusion is created. The audience cannot respond to the fictitious character he wishes to portray.²

In *Anmut und Würde* moral beauty or sublimity in people is explained in an analogous way. There is a kind of physical grace (*Anmut*) and beauty that reflects an inner moral harmony, whereby inner inclinations, nature or instincts coincide with the theoretical demands of morality. Those who struggle to adapt their inclinations to avoid conflict with ethical principles may be worthy and admirable, but do not achieve the spontaneous beauty of grace. However, if they truly, against great temptation, have compelled their instincts to conform to the moral law, they may achieve sublimity. A possible weakness of this essay is that Schiller prevaricates between whether these characteristics are moral, aesthetic or physical; and further whether they are inner characteristics that are manifested externally, or whether they

² Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.61ff., enclosure with letter 28.2.1793.

exist in being manifested externally.³ This reflects Schiller's task as a playwright, however. He has to think of several aims simultaneously: how to represent people and their internal moral dilemmas on the page, how to reflect their inner life in the words they speak and the actions they perform, how to signal to an actor that this is the 'kind' of person, and the kind of motivation, emotion, inner conflict, response or whatever, that he or she is supposed to convey to the public during a performance. He has to create not just externally visible characters, but transparent characters, whose subjective experiences are as accessible, credible and thought-provoking to the public as their external appearance and behaviour.

Schiller, *Anmut und Würde* and the classical past

Schiller opens *Anmut und Würde* by using a typical classical device to illustrate his understanding of grace and dignity, namely a Greek myth. Through the story of the belt of Venus he shows both the objective nature of moral grace and the need to distinguish grace from beauty and dignity.⁴ The myth also reflects Schiller's perceptive relationship with his readers, who are introduced to the more abstract discussion developed at the heart of the essay through a conventional and possibly familiar analogy. It portrays the Greeks as a surprisingly simple people, who, before philosophy as such had developed, could perceive emotionally what they could not yet express rationally.⁵ They expressed their understanding through imagery. Schiller himself, therefore, like them, adopts an apparently simplistic approach, using myth to convey a philosophical message. From this observation *Naïve and Sentimental* went on to develop the concept of the naïve in poetry.

³ Frederick Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p107.

⁴ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.71.

⁵ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.70.

Schiller was not criticising those who rely on imagery or sensibility. As in the *Aesthetic Letters*, the aim is to redress the contemporary German or European tendency to over-value rationality, the use of abstract concepts and the operation of the will, and neglect the complexity of insights communicable through sensuous imagery, and the good achievable by sound instinct. Pure theory lacks the elegance and beauty of much non-rational thought. Hence, the supposedly primitive Greeks achieved more than the dry scholars of the eighteenth century could understand, or could perhaps only struggle clumsily to express.⁶ Thus we tend to overlook not only that we can apply practical reason to objects, but that appearances can become objects of the reason, and be used to express ideas.⁷ Indeed, Schiller's own use of myth demonstrates how human beings still respond to the imaginative presentation of abstract ideas. *Anmut und Würde* thus increases our respect for the sensuous and physical, which must work as integrated elements of the human mind. This is why myth can effectively convey philosophical ideas. Later in the decade this idea contributed to Friedrich Hölderlin's view of the importance of poetry,⁸ and Friedrich

⁶ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.70.

⁷ Friedrich Schiller, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1994, p.79.

...daß es zweierlei Arten gibt, wodurch Erscheinungen Objekte der Vernunft werden und Ideen ausdrücken können. Es ist nicht immer nötig, daß die Vernunft diese Ideen aus den Erscheinungen *herauszieht*; sie kann sie auch in dieselben *hineinlegen*.

...that there are two ways in which representations can become objects of reason, and express ideas. It is not always necessary for the reason to *draw* these ideas *from* representations; it can also *place* these ideas *in* them.

This is Schiller's expression of Kant's theory of the aesthetic ideas.

Immanuel Kant, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (tr.) Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, *Critique of the power of judgement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §49, 5:314, 5:315, pp.192, 193.

⁸ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Fragment philosophische Briefe', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, J. Ch. F. Hölderlin, *Theoretischen Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.15.

Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Die tragische Ode... (Grund zum Empedocles)', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, J. Ch. F. Hölderlin, *Theoretischen Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.80.

Schlegel presented the same idea as a plea for the development of a new mythology for the modern age.⁹

The Aesthetic Letters

The *Aesthetic Letters* show how the inner harmonising of the drives that dominate human nature and the development of the play drive create the ability to appreciate beauty, and enables the full personal and social development of humankind.¹⁰ The first step from primitive animal savagery towards civilisation occurred when man developed delight in semblance, and a propensity to ornamentation and play.¹¹ Schiller illustrates how, for instance, decoration, dance and polite manners develop as man progresses away from brute submission to the demands of the sense drive.¹² Eventually, this process allows the realisation of various human potentialities, including the establishment of social and political harmony. This harmony will also be present in the artistic works produced in a society whose members are capable of using the play drive. Every artistic detail will contribute unobtrusively but essentially to the overall appearance of the whole, while the work's overall configuration will give function and significance to every detail.¹³

⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Gespräch über die Poesie: Rede über die Mythologie', in (ed.) Andreas Huysen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.197.

¹⁰ See chapter 4 above.

¹¹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXVI: §3, p.193.

¹² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXVII: §§ 6, 7, p.213.

¹³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII: §6, p.157.

... he will, even in the most successfully realised whole, attend only to the parts, and in the presence of the most beautiful form, respond only to the matter. [He will]... laboriously scratch away until he has uncovered all those individual details that the master, with infinite skill, has caused to disappear in the harmony of the whole.

Hölderlin's essay, *Wenn der Dichter einmal...*, develops this suggestion in some detail. See: J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretischen Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998. See also chapter 9 below.

Semblance and the earlier writings

What, then, happened to the apparently central aim of the *Kallias Letters*, to establish an objective theory of aesthetics? Even within the *Kallias Letters*, objectivity gave way to ‘freedom in appearance’, whereby beauty became the word for things that seem to be free, or to have exercised some kind of inner free will or self-determining choice. In the *Aesthetic Letters* this was superseded by *Schein*, or semblance, as a key concept. In semblance, the apparent success of the beautiful object in having brought its own content into perfect agreement with its own form is reinterpreted as a pleasing balance between reality and illusion that appears to be a point of harmony within the art object.¹⁴ A work of art is honest and truthful if semblance is open and deliberate, not deceptive, and not trying to pass itself off as reality.¹⁵ Works of art must have concealed functionality if they are to be noble or beautiful.¹⁶ That is, not that they must be functional, but that any function must be concealed. This is

the artistic secret of the master, that he can transform (*vertilgen*) substance by means of form.¹⁷

Kivy, writing from the perspective of the philosophy of music, believes that, right up to Kant, *mimesis* was presumed to be the purpose of art. Schiller’s handling of the notion of semblance could represent an important step towards a break with *mimesis*. Art’s value lies in its very artificiality, in knowing it is not reality, not in its success in

¹⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXVI, §7, p.195.

¹⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXVI: §11, p.197.

¹⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXIII; fn.1, p.167.

¹⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII; §5, p.156 (my translation).

imitating reality.¹⁸ This indicates that Schiller was moving away from classical aesthetics. Schiller does not explore the objective dimension of beauty any further. Beauty in the arts has now become synonymous with artistic semblance, which appeals to both our senses and intellect, strengthens the sense and form drives, activates the play drive, and creates better people and a better society.¹⁹

Perfect style in art should even overcome and remove the specific limitations of any particular art. For example, sculpture and the plastic arts should be capable of affecting us in the same way as a piece of music.²⁰ The Romantic belief in interdisciplinary collaboration was perhaps reinforced by this initial idea. One of the problems we face, however, is that although, in theory, engagement with the beauty of a work of art should enliven our mind, produce a condition of perfectly balanced aesthetic experience, and fit us for any kind of task that follows,²¹ in practice, most actual works nevertheless excite one side of our nature at the expense of the other. This may leave us unprepared for mundane practical tasks immediately after enjoying, for instance, an elevating piece of music. This problem diminishes, however, in proportion to the quality, firstly of the work of art and secondly, of our aesthetic experience.²² Thus, failure to appreciate a work of art might be caused by a shortcoming in the work of art itself, or by a shortcoming in the audience or viewer.²³

Contrary to what Kant thought, aesthetic judgements cannot be presumed to occur as

¹⁸ Peter Kivy, *New Essays on Musical Understanding*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.19.

¹⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII; and XXV ff. In these letters Schiller explains how primitive mankind comes to enjoy how things appear (*der schöne Schein*).

²⁰ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII: §4, p.155.

²¹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII: §2, p.151, 153.

²² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII: §4, p.153.

²³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII: §§ 3, 6, pp.153, 157.

a result of contemplation or reflection alone.²⁴ From this it follows that any audience needs to actively engage with the art work in order to appreciate or judge it fully, once again, an idea that will acquire more importance in the work of Hölderlin and Schlegel.

Schiller has thus established two separate points of balance, one within the self and the other perceived within the work of art. Using our well developed play drive, we can make aesthetic judgements, based on a consciousness of autonomous semblance. Individuals and societies can appreciate this distinction with varying degrees of success, depending on how well their play drive operates. This still means that the object's reality is irrelevant to our judgement, just as Kant had said, but, compared with Kant, Schiller has, as it were, nevertheless demoted disinterestedness from its prominent role in making aesthetic judgements, and replaced it by semblance. What Kant regarded as the suppression or withholding of personal or animal interest, Schiller has reinterpreted as an awareness of concealed functionality. Both are explanations that acknowledge the existence of some kind of inner tension in the observer. In Naïve and Sentimental this idea of 'semblance' is modified further, so that, effectively, it develops into the notion of sentimentality.

Another new feature introduced by the *Aesthetic Letters* is that society influences art and the artist; though the artist must sometimes oppose society,²⁵ because he or she must distinguish passing fashion from genuine good work,

The artist is indeed the child of his age; but woe to him if he is, at the same time, its ward, or worse still, its minion.²⁶

²⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXIV, §2, pp.171, 173.

²⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII: §6, p.157.

'It is by no means always a proof of formlessness in the work of art itself if it makes its effect solely through its contents; this may just as often be evidence of a lack of form in him who judges it.'

Thus, Schiller's conservative, classical solution to the artist's need to cope with variations in public approbation²⁷ is that the artist should ignore the false values of his own, corrupt age, and aim for something of lasting value. The artist admittedly has no option but to take his theme or content from what is presently available to him, but he should form it from within his own, absolute being.²⁸ Thus, by attempting to distinguish between popularity and quality in art, Schiller actually raises a problem he does not resolve. Taste, he tells us, is the 'aesthetic mode of perception', and thus, we may infer, the condition of being able to exercise the play drive.²⁹ He thus seems to retain an absolute and unchanging standard of artistic taste, but nevertheless emphasises personal and social change. He believed, therefore, that if human nature can be 'put right,' artistic taste will follow. However, he has little guidance for the artist, who in the meantime has to woo the public, and convince them through beauty rather than criticism.³⁰ He must uphold the standard of beauty, unlike weaker contemporaries:

²⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, IX: §4, p.55.

²⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, IX: §5, p.57.

'But how is the artist to protect himself against the corruption of the age that besets him on all sides? By disdainning its opinion... Let him express... [this ideal union of what is possible and what is necessary]... and silently project it into the infinity of time.'

²⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, IX: §4, p.55.

'His theme he will take from the present, but his form he will borrow from a nobler time, nay, from beyond time altogether, from the absolute, unchanging, unity of his being. Here, from the pure aether of his genius, the living source of beauty flows down, untainted by the corrupting of the generations and ages wallowing in the dark eddies below.'

²⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXVII, §10, p.215.

³⁰ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, IX: §7, p.61.

Nothing is more common than for... art to pay homage to the spirit of the age, or for creative minds to accept the critical standards of prevailing taste.³¹

The true artist has to re-educate an entire society, but using absolute standards that perhaps only he knows or is capable of appreciating. Despite any apparent tensions, ‘the pure aether of genius’ will apply absolute rules of artistic form, even to culturally specific material. Schiller offers some encouragement, however:

It is in the modest sanctuary of your heart that you must rear victorious truth, and project it out of yourself in the form of beauty, so that not only thought can pay it homage, but sense, too, lay loving hold on its appearance.³²

This leaves the audience facing a problem too. We, the public, can develop and gain confidence in using the play drive, but there is no simple criterion for distinguishing fashion from true beauty. As our moral sensibilities develop, interacting with a lively sense drive, and as our play drive strengthens, we are expected to become more appreciative of beauty.³³ Each occasion on which we make a judgement about the beautiful requires a genuinely active act of judgement, a resolution of the pull between nature and form, or sense and reason within us.³⁴ Doing so improves us, but also means we might never definitively complete the process of responding to or evaluating the aesthetic value of a beautiful object.³⁵ Thus, for Schiller, mankind is necessarily in a state of constant revision towards an ideal, though the process of change is triggered by something in our external life circumstances, not by our moral

³¹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, IX: §3, p.55.

³² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, IX: §7, p.59.

³³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII, §2, p.153; XXV, §5, p.187.

³⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XVI; § 4, p.115.

³⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIV, §1, p.95.

This is the way Schiller describes the possibility of mankind’s developing the inner drives to their full strength.

sense.³⁶ Earlier writers on aesthetics had sought to resolve uncertainty and indeterminacy by rigidly defining beauty and the task of art. Schiller, however, tried to preserve the more indeterminate characteristics with which he was used to working as a practitioner, but show how they related to a new analysis of humanity itself. The human mind is no more fixed or static in its operation than any of the aesthetic acts in which it engages. Although we may observe these implications, and recognise both semblance and a drive-based human nature as hinting at the possibility of an extensive range of irresolvable indeterminacies, Schiller, as we are about to see, did not develop this idea of indeterminacy in *Naïve and Sentimental*. Three years later, however, Friedrich Schlegel elevated the acceptance of a more fluid conception of human nature and perception into an important principle of artistic criticism in his *Athenäums-Fragmente*. He advocated the repeated reading and re-reading of literature, since we bring to each reading the changed background of our experience, which enriches and modifies our response to the work of art.

On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature

In *Naïve and Sentimental* Schiller went on to consider the questions, ‘What is the best kind of literature?’, ‘What is the mark of great literature?’ *Naïve and Sentimental* assesses the work of a range of ancient and modern writers, sometimes using them to exemplify a particular style of writing. In this sense Schiller continued Baumgarten’s work from the 1730s.³⁷ However, although it is possible to emphasise his continuity with this tradition, his approach to artistic and creative work was very

³⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXVI, §1, p.191.

³⁷ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, Halle: 1735.

different, particularly in the way he defined aesthetic perfection, and especially since his revaluation of Kant.³⁸

In one respect, by analysing what classical writers had done, Baumgarten's work itself was symptomatic of the distinction Schiller makes in *Naïve and Sentimental*. The *sentimentalisch* tendency of more recent society, says Schiller, made people too self-conscious to write in the naïve style of antiquity; their artistic judgement was, in that sense, tainted. The very desire to equal any given age or style in itself precluded success. The Greeks, already praised for their 'natural humanity',³⁹ had an innocent, naïve relationship with the world around them, and this is the key to classical art: its naïvety. Baumgarten, like Schiller's contemporaries could only view Greek art as outsiders, shaped by the rational and reflective methods in which they had been trained, or which they had absorbed from their cultural surroundings. An implication of Schiller's position is that the Enlightenment, by encouraging independent thought, had damaged our instinctual artistic responses. The artist had become too knowing. Schiller's recognition that he could view and relate to Ancient Greek art only as an outsider with different cultural presuppositions is a kind of intellectual landmark. It is an idea taken up by younger thinkers, including Hölderlin and Schlegel, and it later became an important feature of the German hermeneutic tradition.⁴⁰ Even within the limits of this thesis we shall see that Hölderlin later agreed

³⁸Though see: Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.43.

He points out that Baumgarten was not, strictly speaking, a 'full-fledged supporter of the aesthetics of perfection'.

³⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, VI: §2, p.32.

'They were wedded to all the delights of art and all the dignity of wisdom, without, however, like us, falling prey to their seduction.' They were superior to us 'In fullness of form no less than of content, at once philosophic and creative, sensitive and energetic, the Greeks combined the first youth of imagination with the manhood of reason in a glorious manifestation of humanity.'

⁴⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Hermeneutics and Social Science*, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p.31.

with Schiller about the significance of cultural differences when we try to understand Greek drama.⁴¹ He also seems to have been alluding to Schiller's warnings against trying to relive the naïve naturalism of the Greeks, when he writes of our misplaced attempts to regain the innocence of childhood.⁴² Friedrich Schlegel identified the benefits of cultural distance for our appreciation of a more recent deceased writer, namely, Lessing.⁴³ For Schlegel cultural detachment came to be seen as a strength, and in the hermeneutic tradition, as being both unavoidable and essential to a full understanding.

Schiller admired Homer, Shakespeare and even, with some qualification, Goethe, as naïve writers. Their naïvety shines through in the way their readers or audience feel the life in the characters and events, which speak to them so directly. We know how strongly he felt this of Goethe's work from his comments on the characters in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* as he read draft chapters before publication.⁴⁴ Unlike Goethe, Schiller's capacity to concentrate on his writing had been seriously disrupted by Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, until he had worked out for himself, and his public, why and how he was able to write, and write well. Schiller thus excluded himself from the range of naïve writers. However, just as the man who struggles to become moral can exhibit the sublimity of moral dignity,⁴⁵

⁴¹ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Die tragische Ode... (Grund zum Empedocles)', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.81.

⁴² See below, chapter 8.

Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005, p.23.

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.31.

⁴³ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, pp.46-75.

⁴⁴ (ed.) Philipp Stein, *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe in den Jahren 1794 bis 1805*, Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, no date, Letter 32, 09.12.1794, Letter 77, 19.06.1795.

⁴⁵ see *Anmut und Würde* and chapter 2 above.

just as the man who eventually struggles to bring his rational and material drives into balance can generate a play drive which enables him to produce and fully enjoy beautiful artefacts,⁴⁶ so too, according to Schiller in *Naïve and Sentimental*, the writer who either lacks naïvety, or has lost it through cultural influences, can produce the very best kind of modern work. Thus, Schiller's admiration of Goethe, Shakespeare and the ancients does not perpetuate the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*⁴⁷ and is not a sign of modesty or despair.⁴⁸ It is an acknowledgement that he and many other good modern writers used an approach more appropriate to modern times.⁴⁹

Although he was conscious of how his own times differed from the ancient classical age, Schiller rather underplayed the idea that each historical period was unique. He suggested that humanity has not changed very much over the centuries, so that individuals will react in similar ways to similar circumstances, whenever they occur. Again, this is a point developed further in the hermeneutical theory of understanding. Inter-personal and inter-cultural communication and understanding are only partial, yet they are possible. Thus, for Schiller, even Horace, Baumgarten's frequent point of reference, though an ancient, was not a naïve poet.⁵⁰ He lived in a

⁴⁶ see *The Aesthetic Letters* and chapter 4 above.

⁴⁷This expression was commonly used to refer to the dispute, originating in France, but continued also in Germany, between those like Winckelmann, who admired the classical model of art, and those who claimed that eighteenth century artists also had merit.

Harrison, Charles, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger (eds.), *Art in Theory 1648 - 1815: An anthology of changing ideas*, Malden MA; Oxford; Carlton Vic.: Blackwell, 2000, p.15.

⁴⁸ Quotations from Goethe's later memoirs suggest that Goethe possibly exaggerated the significance of this, and the extent to which Schiller regretted his lack of creative naïvety. See:

Peter-André Alt, 'Der sentimentalische Leser: Schillers Lektüre', in (ed.) Heinz Ludwig Arnold, *Schiller: Text + Kritik, Zeitschrift für Literatur: Sonderband IV/05*, Munich: Richard Boorberg Verlag, 2005, p.17.

⁴⁹We have not explored this area of influence, but for some indication of how Schiller was influenced by the more historical and cultural approach of Herder, see:

T.J. Reed, *Schiller*, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp.52ff.

⁵⁰Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, trans. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.35.

corrupt and turbulent time, and was probably the first sentimental poet, aware that reality fell short of the ideal of nature. Similarly, Goethe could only have been a truly naïve writer in another, more naïve age.⁵¹ As it was, he adapted. In the ancient world naïve artists simply and successfully responded to the world of the senses, thus completely fulfilling their finite goal.⁵² Influenced by the complex rationality of modern Europe, however, Goethe had to use ideas and imagination as well as instinct, which extended his range beyond strict naïvety. And Goethe is no less great for being the product of a sentimental age. The keynote of *Naïve and Sentimental* is not lamentation for the lost classical age. The naïve poet depends entirely on his experience, and his success is therefore a 'lucky throw',⁵³ but modern, sentimental poets are much more ambitious; they go beyond their own experience, strive for an infinite ideal, and lead readers towards more complex ideas. Although admittedly unable to fulfil their now infinite aims,⁵⁴ at their best they exceed the ancient naïve poets' attainment of a finite goal.⁵⁵

⁵¹Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, trans. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, Introduction, p.12. See also the main text, pp.38, 56.

Friedrich Schiller, *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005, pp.32, 59.

⁵² Friedrich Schiller, *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005, p.35.

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.40.

⁵³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.68.

⁵⁴ This claim about poets matches Schiller's comments in the *Aesthetic Letters* regarding the fulfilment of mankind's full potential. See:

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIV: §1, p.95.

Looking ahead, it also agrees with Hölderlin's view that mankind's search for the truth is an 'endless approximation'. (see chapter 7 below.)

⁵⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.40.

In the naïve, nature is victorious over art. This may happen either without the knowledge or will of the naïve person or writer, or in the full consequence of it.⁵⁶ Sentimental writing, however, is 'always concerned simultaneously... with two opposing subjects, namely with the ideal and with experience'.⁵⁷ Sentimental artists are either the 'witnesses or the avengers of nature',⁵⁸ depending on the extent to which they long for a golden past or criticise a corrupt present, and on the extent to which they are able to look forward to or promote improvements. The sentimental can thus be either nostalgic or utopian in its approach. In all cases the actual is being compared to an idea. Schiller believed the greatest sentimental writers succeeded in 'leading art back to nature', incorporating both strands of the dichotomy. Kant himself had argued that art must seem like nature, and nature like art.

In a product of art one must be aware that it is art, and not nature; yet the purposiveness of its form must still seem to be as free from all constraint by arbitrary rules as if it were a mere product of nature.... Nature was beautiful, if at the same time it looked like art; and art can only be called beautiful if we are aware that it is art and yet it looks to us like nature.⁵⁹

New though the naïve / sentimental dichotomy might appear, Kant was still providing a key idea.

This is a further example of Schiller's concern to preserve Kant's link between freedom and artistic beauty, despite having departed already from a strictly Kantian definition of freedom. His identification of true freedom with the real or effectively real absence of external constraint, but the presence of inner self-determination, has

⁵⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.24.

⁵⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, n.59, p.103.

⁵⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.35.

⁵⁹ Immanuel Kant, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (tr.) Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, *Critique of the power of judgement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §45, 5:306, p.185.

been noted already.⁶⁰ Thus, in the *Kallias Letters* the technical or natural perfection or structure of the object appears to be in free, autonomous agreement with its content or material appearance.⁶¹ In *Anmut und Würde* the most morally and physically pleasing people find their inclination in free and apparently natural agreement with their moral duty. In *On the Sublime* the very best of such people find themselves in circumstances that reveal they would continue to act and think in this way, however extreme the challenges presented to them by blind natural forces or by circumstance.⁶² In the *Aesthetic Letters* aesthetic freedom is experienced in mankind when true human nature has come into existence, and the rationality of form and the materials of sense are in harmony. We are products of Nature, but Nature can be blind, raw, brutish, unthinking, utterly and by definition inhuman. Schiller's work suggests that we are clever enough to find an accommodation with Nature, a way of remaining a natural product, while yet fully retaining all those differences that have traditionally caused us to contrast ourselves with blind natural forces. In fact, by doing this, we fully acknowledge the workings of nature within ourselves, so that Schiller can use the term 'nature', or 'natural' in certain contexts, as a criterion by means of which to judge the value of a person, action or, especially, a work of art. As Behler puts it: 'a moralization of nature and naturalization of morality'.⁶³

⁶⁰ R.D. Miller, *Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p.95.

Here Miller is referring to the *Kallias Letters*, especially letter 23.2.93, p.38.

⁶¹ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam jun., 1999, p.35. letter, 19.2.1793.

⁶² Friedrich Schiller, 'Über das Erhabene', in *Schillers Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4, Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1879, pp.726-738. Available at: <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/?id=12&xid=2405&kapitel=1&cHash=f02826dfcf2> [accessed 17.06.08]

No individual page references are given in the online version.

⁶³ Constantin Behler, *Nostalgic Teleology: Friedrich Schiller and the Schemata of Aesthetic Humanity*, Bern; Berlin, etc: Peter Lang, 1995, p.206.

Though we note this as one of Schiller's more important claims, he does not clarify the relationship among his sense of freedom as 'absence of determination', freedom as 'moral self-determination', and nature as a form of moral validation.

Despite the greatness of Goethe and Shakespeare, it would be more typical for the best modern authors to be sentimental, because of their cultural background. Thus, Schiller claims that the literary genre, subject matter, or even the exact use of language in any given work was less important than the frame of mind of the writer, or rather that these technicalities only derive from the author's thought. Naïvety or sentimentality spring from within the creative human being, which leads us back to the idea that a well-balanced and fulfilled human being produces the best literary work. Such a view is very different from the presumptions underlying the work of either Baumgarten or Reynolds, who almost give the impression that the good writer or painter could repeatedly apply a tested template. For Schiller, on the contrary, good work was the polished public endpoint of a deeply rooted personal process that was constantly being developed and refined.

Here the position developed in the *Aesthetic Letters* reappears. The play drive united the sense and form drives harmoniously. It was a hard won unity created from diversity and conflict between the two. Similarly, in the best kind of sentimental writing the writer has resolved all conflict between the real and the ideal,⁶⁴ and in this state of equilibrium, where the greatest unity and diversity co-exist, the poet gives human nature its full expression.⁶⁵ For Schiller, the poet should be able to synthesise the sensuous and the rational or ideal, and produce literature capable of developing, strengthening and harmonising the drives in his individual readers, and thus, in society as a whole. The sentimental poet can heal the divide that culture and

⁶⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.66.

⁶⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.66.

civilisation have caused in mankind.⁶⁶ Ultimately, by actually improving the culture that surrounds the individual members of humanity, the writer can create a situation in which there is no gap between reality and the ideal, only peace and harmony.⁶⁷ The fact that sentimentality was an attempt to balance the real and the ideal, both in human nature and poetry, shows that it was also an extension of the idea of semblance. Readers or audiences hold conceptions of both the real and the ideal in their minds simultaneously, while the writer conveys both an ideal capable of educating, and a reality that is familiar and entertaining, all at once. This attempt to balance the real and ideal, which is one aspect of sentimentality, is something that is also prominent in the work of Hölderlin, when he identifies the moment of harmonious opposition that contributes to the perfect moment in any work of art, and in Schlegel too; it therefore appears again in the later chapters of this thesis.

However, although Schiller expects the work of the artist to respond to and affect social or cultural conditions, he also seems to expect that standards of taste will remain constant,⁶⁸ and might sometimes need to guide or restrain the artist's genius,⁶⁹ as Kant thought also.⁷⁰ He did not resolve this equivocation until shortly before his

⁶⁶Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.39.

⁶⁷Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.62.

⁶⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1999, 'Nachwort', fn.1, p.167.

⁶⁹Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.28.

Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005, p.19.

He says both that '...protective nature abandons them, because the power of example carries them away, or the decadent taste of their time leads them astray.'

and, in the next paragraph, that '...the most complex tasks must be solved by genius with understanding, simplicity and ease... by triumphing over complex art by means of simplicity... not... according to known principles but according to sudden impulses and feelings... [which] are inspirations from a god... [and] laws for all periods and all races of peoples.'

⁷⁰ H.E. Allison, *Kant's theory of taste*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.300.

death, when he rejected the idea of an unchanging standard of taste, stating that anachronistic yardsticks could kill art.⁷¹

Schiller's earlier explanation of how the perception of beauty is one of the functions of the practical reason, and a free, typically human, activity of the will, has already established a logical, as well as practical, connection between aesthetics and ethics. In *Naïve and Sentimental*, Schiller makes some attempt to illustrate how great literature is in fact always associated with morality and the decency of social convention, while rejecting the judgement of 'frosty decency'.⁷² The poetic drive is a naïve drive, in that it is the way back to nature. 'The moral drive impels him increasingly back to it and it is with this drive that the poetic gift stands in the closest relationship.'⁷³ Thus, any poet who portrayed the indulgence of unrestrained animal sensuousness in his written works would encourage only the one-sided development of human nature, and lead people to be less than they could be. True human nature, as opposed to actual, and possibly degenerate, human nature⁷⁴ is also the balanced, moral ideal.

The debate about whether immoral subject matter or images are compatible with the work of the artist has continued far beyond the writers referred to by Schiller,⁷⁵ and rests on the question of whether human beings are already good and strong enough to be trusted to know what is good for them. Perhaps there is an irony here, because, if they could be encouraged to become even better, they would then

⁷¹Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit und Anmut und Würde*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart/L. Philipp Reclam jun., 1999, 'Nachwort', fn.1, p.167.

⁷²Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.59.

⁷³Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.38.

⁷⁴Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.69.

⁷⁵Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, pp.59ff.

presumably want and enjoy what the artist would really prefer to give them. Once again, Schiller's awareness of the mismatch between man as he tends to be and man as he could be comes through. There was no suggestion of such tension in Kant's original conception of humanity. Admittedly, man was capable of immorality, if he failed to exercise his Good Will, but a single, rational decision could change that. Kant did not consider the possible effects of cultural pressures, which Schiller now believed could either enhance or damage human nature.

Throughout his period of sustained theoretical writing Schiller wrote as if speaking directly to an audience, possibly one well known to him. The *Kallias Letters* were a genuine personal correspondence, though perhaps conducted in the knowledge that the letters might be more widely circulated. *Anmut und Würde* was written for Schiller's own periodical, and thus, in a way, for his own audience. The *Aesthetic Letters* were written in epistolary form, their first version as a genuine correspondence with the Duke of Augustenberg, and then revised and published in instalments, in the same periodical, as also was *Naïve and Sentimental*. Its tenor is also intimate, and contains some very personal opinions and evaluations, which might even have been insulting, if Schiller had identified the individuals to whom he was referring.⁷⁶ Thus all these works exhibit a strong authorial voice. The reader knows he or she is gaining access to the thoughts of an individual. This is also an important implied difference between the naïve and the sentimental, as the sentimental writer mediates between the content and the audience. Successful sentimental writers, such as Sterne, Peacock and Wieland, shared the characteristic Schiller most recommended in the modern sentimental author, the ability to step back from one's own culture and reflect upon it.

⁷⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, pp.72, 73.

Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005, pp.84, 85.

He who is the *creature* and the *caricature* of his time has truly the least calling to be the *portrayer* of his time.⁷⁷

He had clearly not forgotten the advice he gave in the *Aesthetic Letters*: 'live with your century but do not be its creature.'⁷⁸ The role of the sentimental writer is

to transform the subject rather than that the base material should drag the imitator down with it to earth'.⁷⁹

While the writer is doing this, his reader should be prepared that he

will always put one out of tune with real life for a few moments.⁸⁰

Schiller is suggesting that the sentimental modern writer can create something beautiful by consciously exploring the possibilities of semblance, though without referring directly to or having defined, 'beauty'. This idea of the writer as someone sufficiently detached from normality to be able to look at society or events with a fresh eye and help the public to reinterpret the world around them in a slightly different way is one that has subsequently gained ground, to the point that by the twentieth century it had become an almost unattributable truism, accepted as an orthodox way of judging artistic content. The self-conscious tension between the activity of the writer and the illusion he is seeking to create developed in the five years after Schiller's *Naïve and Sentimental* into Friedrich Schlegel's idea of Romantic irony. Schlegel's work thus came to the fore at a time when beauty had already been identified with semblance, when it was uncontroversial to identify semblance with sentimentality, and, on the basis of what we have just said, reasonable, though not exact, to identify sentimentality with Romantic irony. Schlegel

⁷⁷Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.71.

⁷⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, IX: §7, p.61.

⁷⁹Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.69.

⁸⁰Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.67.

is best known for having further identified irony as the key to artistic and literary beauty, so we can now say that, in doing so, he effectively completed a circle that Schiller had initiated.

Although the naïve and the sentimental create distinctive kinds of literature, and although *Naïve and Sentimental* completes Schiller's reflections on aesthetics, naivety and sentimentality are, strictly speaking, properties of the writer, not the work. In the last pages of the essay Schiller describes how a writer must balance naïvety and sentimentality and go beyond the pure form of either in order to become a truly sentimental writer. It is a familiar Schillerian model, and, although Schiller's aesthetic theory no longer, by the time of *Naïve and Sentimental*, engaged explicitly with Kant, late in the essay he acknowledges that this way of resolving dichotomies has been generalised from Kant's analysis of the way the categories resolve themselves within each grouping.⁸¹ Thus nature, and the naïve that corresponds with it, is opposed to art as the suspension of nature through the reason working freely; and finally the two are synthesised in the ideal in which a perfected art returns to nature.⁸² The principle is generalised even further in Hölderlin's identification of the *harmoniscentgegengesetzt*, which simultaneously resolved several pairs of related dichotomies.⁸³

The writer must achieve a balance between the naïve - presenting the lively, colourful immediacy of the sensuous world, which entertains and relaxes many readers, and the sentimental - offering more thoughtful, contemplative, abstract writing, which can educate and improve the reader. At either extreme the inadequate

⁸¹ Immanuel Kant, *A Critique of Pure Reason*, (ed.) trans. F. Max Müller, Garden City NY: Anchor Doubleday, 1966, B110, p.64.

⁸² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, n.64, p.104.

⁸³ See chapters 6–9 below.

writer risks emptiness, either because the content is unstructured, purposeless or trivial, or because the written word is too high-flown and detached from reality, lacking any real content.⁸⁴ Successfully combining both strands, however, produces the very highest quality literature.

Attaining such synthesis is not easy. Mostly the modern writer has perforce 'fallen away from the simplicity of nature and has been handed over to the dangerous guidance of his reason'. It is therefore beneficial for him 'to see again a pure example of the laws of nature and to purify himself from the corruptions of art in this faithful mirror'.⁸⁵ We might envisage an author oscillating between nature and reflection in an attempt to reach a good point of balance. The corruptions of art, mentioned here, provide a darker reference than usual to his view of art as semblance, usually benign, but here clearly carrying unpleasant connotations of either deception or excessive artificiality. Schiller's 'faithful mirror' may be an allusion to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act III sc.ii, a passage which Reynolds also quotes in a similar context.⁸⁶ Reynolds thought reference to nature would result in a simpler style, that followed the artistic subject's form, free of excessive ornament or contemporary prejudice. While this has some echoes in Schiller's argument, Reynolds, unlike Schiller, considered that the whole enterprise of explaining or clarifying artistic processes and values provided evidence that rationality and some very prescriptive rule-following underlay all art. The use of *Hamlet* as an example, however, is almost emblematic of the aesthetic debates of the 1790s. Not only does Schiller allude to the play obliquely in this work that reassessed the neo-classical ideal, but, almost simultaneously, Goethe's *Wilhelm*

⁸⁴Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.72.

⁸⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.63.

⁸⁶ Joshua Reynolds, *Seven Discourses on Art*, London: Cassell, 1901, accessed as *Project Gutenberg etext #2176, May, 2000*, Discourse 7, p.64.

Meister portrayed characters who were deeply involved in the performance and analysis of the play. Meanwhile, Friedrich Schlegel's *Studium-Aufsatz* cited *Hamlet* as an example of the paradox of Shakespeare, who broke so many of the rules of neo-classicism, yet somehow, and puzzlingly, remained great. Schiller himself saw no puzzle in Shakespeare. Despite having lived in the early modern age, Shakespeare has a natural, naïve strength that leaves him comparatively free of transitory cultural pressures.

Despite his generalisations about ancient and modern times, Schiller's view is thus that every good writer must find his own mix of naivety and sentimentality, within some undefined acceptable range. At either extreme, if the writer fails to synthesise the dual strands of naïvety and sentimentality, he risks vacuity, but there is nevertheless a wide spread between the extremes, and a gifted writer could work anywhere within these limits. Schiller and Goethe were writers who found different points of personal balance. To work at the more naïve end of this spectrum, as Goethe supposedly did, while assailed by the sentimental influences of eighteenth century civilisation, would require a particular kind of skill.

Poets of this naïve type are no longer really in place in an artificial era. Neither are they possible any longer in such an era or at least only possible in so far as they *fail to conform* to their age and are protected by a favourable destiny from its mutilating influence. They can never emerge as part of society but sometimes they appear outside of it, rather as outsiders whom one wonders at and badly brought up sons of nature at whom one is annoyed. Though they are refreshing figures for the artist who studies them and for the real connoisseur who knows how to appreciate them, yet they do not get on well on the whole and with their epoch... They are hated by the critics... as *boundary breakers* who should be suppressed.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.38. Schiller's italics.

Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005, p.32. The italicised words in the quotation are: *wild laufen*. 'Run wild', the obvious translation, is, I would suggest, more vivid and appropriate than Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly's choice of words.

Again, Schiller potentially sets the artist apart from society. This extract might foreshadow the cult of the Bohemian artist, separate from and superior to the society that fails to acknowledge him, a figure familiar from the plot of various late nineteenth century operas. Such a theme was still proving fruitful for Thomas Mann in his 1903 novella, *Tonio Kröger*.⁸⁸ Once again, it is a suggestion picked up by Schlegel as he advocates a new morality for the initiates of Romantic *Poesie*.⁸⁹

Schiller has moved towards a view of human thought and nature that avoided the apparently strict compartmentalisation of the Kantian analysis. He has also been looking for a way of encompassing the variations among individuals and the variety present in their creative work, to which Kant did not appear to do justice. He perhaps not intend the adjustments he made to Kant to instigate an aesthetic revolution.⁹⁰ In fact, however, he lost the structural unity that had been Kant's strength. Schiller modified his arguments in successive essays, and possibly even, as the tables in chapters 3 and 4, and the diagrams in the appendix show, from one group of letters to the next. Thus, it was important to him to suggest that, even within the diverse literary canon inherited from classical time, but still being added to in the present day, some of the certainties of Kant's analysis still held. He did not wish to abandon traditional values of beauty and sublimity in art, but merely to explain how cultural factors had made it even more difficult but rewarding to attain them. The sentimental mood is the

⁸⁸ Thomas Mann, *Tonio Kröger*, Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1964. Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/23313> [accessed 15.06.08].

⁸⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenäums-Fragment*, no.414, in Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997.

See chapter 12 below.

⁹⁰ Schiller did, however, realise that he had significantly modified Kant's theory. I therefore disagree with:

Wolfgang Dösing, 'Ästhetische Form als Darstellung der Subjektivität: zur Rezeption Kantische Begriffe in Schillers Ästhetik', in (ed.) Jürgen Bolten, *Schillers Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984, p.185ff.

Dösing believes Schiller applies Kant's 'Subjective idealism' to the theory of poetic composition (ie. to *Dichtung*)

result of the attempt to restore the substance of naïve emotion even under the conditions of reflection.⁹¹ 'Nature makes man one with himself, art separates and divides him, through the ideal he returns to that unity.'⁹² This loss of natural wholeness, struggle with lost nature, and ultimate reconciliation with oneness, is found not only in Schiller, but it virtually sums up the underlying theme that will emerge in our study of Friedrich Hölderlin's thought and work that begins in the next chapter. In fact, the opening paragraphs of *Naïve and Sentimental* recall the extracts from the early drafts of Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, that Schiller had already had an opportunity of reading.⁹³ On the basis of what we have been saying here about Schiller, however, its main significance is that, innovative though the idea of the sentimental is, it is nothing without the naïve. We need the simple, solid substance of harmonious, balanced, classical beauty to ground our flights of sentimentality. Schiller used new and fruitful ideas, but nevertheless remained a writer in the classical tradition.

⁹¹Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, introduction p.16.

⁹²Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.40

⁹³ Violetta Waibel, 'Wechselbestimmung: Zum Verhältnis von Hölderlin, Schiller und Fichte in Jena', in *Fichtestudien*, 1997, vol. 12, p.50.

She compares several quotations from *Naïve and Sentimental* with ideas from Hölderlin. Especially telling is:

Sie sind, was wir waren; sie sind, was wir wieder werden sollen. Wir waren Natur, wie sie, und unsere Kultur soll uns, auf dem Wege der Vernunft und der Freyheit, zur Natur zurückführen.

Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005, p.8.

This is undeniably very similar in sentiment to her quoted extract from the Preface to Hölderlin's *Fragment of "Hyperion"*. See:

(ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.102.

Waibel's claim is that discussion with Hölderlin, and reading Hölderlin's submissions to Schiller's journal modified and softened Schiller's view of nature.

Thus, the moral task that Schiller set in the *Aesthetic Letters*, which looked as though it might develop into a radical political agenda,⁹⁴ and indeed, still had that potentiality, has been channelled, in this essay, into the work of the artist, the world with which Schiller was most familiar. Poetry can give humanity its most complete expression possible.⁹⁵ In summary, from *Naïve and Sentimental* specifically, we gain three fresh and important contributions to the further development of German aesthetic theory after Kant. Firstly, derived from Kant's notion of disinterestedness, comes the knowing, self-conscious, reflective and detached artist. Secondly, we have a revised account of the nature of beauty, derived from Kant's imagery of free play, that provided the possibility for constant change and readjustment, which Schiller has combined also with the fact of cultural change. These two contributions establish an essential tension in place of the calm contemplation of classical aesthetics. The third contribution is Schiller's use of resolved dichotomies, which, in this thesis, reappears in Hölderlin, and which Schlegel went on to regard as the irresolvable means through which change constantly takes place; it was subsequently formalised as a universal dialectical process by Hegel and Marx.

Having written *Naïve and Sentimental*, Schiller could probably be said to have reached a position, which, in effect, resolved the problems that had led him to begin his ten years of theoretical writing. He believed that aesthetic judgements are made directly by the practical reason, independently of logical conceptualisation. He believed that the best people do not have to try to be good; he believed that many of the best artists, in a comparable way, produce their work as a direct manifestation of the workings of a balanced nature. Furthermore, comparing his own experience with

⁹⁴ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXVII, §11, p.217.

⁹⁵ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.39.

existing theory, he knew that his literary work had not originated in any attempt to create the kind of logically perfect writing recommended by Baumgarten; but he also knew from the problems he faced in shaping his own materials to his own satisfaction, that artistic creativity could not be explained by the wholly subjective processes described by Kant. While Schiller's conclusions in *Anmut und Würde* and *Naïve and Sentimental* acknowledge spontaneous and naïve genius, his conclusion, having analysed artistic creativity more extensively than many of his contemporaries, is that the best artists of all are those capable of fusing the artificiality of art with the simplicity of nature.

Schiller himself presumably believed this provided an improved, stable version of the classical status quo. However, by acknowledging the possibility that sentimental art can compete with and excel the naïvety of true classical art, he already raised doubts about the classical ideal. If we further add his claims that writers supposedly have a personal aptitude for either naïvety or sentimentality, and that social pressures are said to place definite limits on these apparently natural tendencies, a rather complicated process of interacting variables is beginning to emerge, all of which, it seems, must contribute towards the creation and evaluation of any work of art. If we look at Schiller from a classical perspective, then, he is beginning to abandon the search for absolute aesthetic perfection. However, if we look back at him from a perspective that we shall later see became established by the end of the 1790s, he is upholding classicism against the Romantic approach. By championing the conception of naïvety, which he regards as a robust, even if less current, alternative to the sentimental way of working, he sustains the norms of the classical tradition. Romanticism challenged this. We shall later read Hölderlin's

reasons for regarding Homer as a self-consciously skilled writer,⁹⁶ and Schlegel's evaluation of Shakespeare as a writer who chooses when to call forth emotional empathy in an audience, and when to use the apparently realistic portrayal of carefully selected characters to convey a philosophical message.⁹⁷ In other words, Schiller's examples of naïvety did not really stand up to scrutiny. As he himself found with Horace, and as Lessing found with the sculptor of the Laocoön, the more closely we examine the work of the artist, the more we find ourselves removed from the calm contemplation implicit in the classical judgement of taste. The supposed category of the naïve begins to dissolve in favour of the sentimental, which thus, contrary to Schiller's probable intentions, would eventually whittle the classical ideal away completely.

⁹⁶ see chapter 9 below

⁹⁷ see chapter 10 below.

SECTION 2: FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN

CHAPTER 6

HÖLDERLIN'S PANTHEISM AND THE NOTION OF BEING

From Schiller we now turn to examine the work of Friedrich Hölderlin, the poet who admired Schiller even from his teenage years.¹ We have examined Schiller's work chronologically, and seen how his philosophy and aesthetics changed during the decade. This method is less appropriate to Hölderlin. Instead, the following chapters aim to reconstruct his philosophy and closely linked aesthetics by identifying and explaining certain key elements and influences in his theoretical and literary work, and showing how they can fit together into a coherent whole. The problem with this approach has been to decide the best order in which to address these key concepts, since each aspect of Hölderlin's thought seems to presuppose at least some of the others. However, footnotes may help point the reader towards parts of the thesis where briefly mentioned terms are explained more fully. Interestingly, Hölderlin's own view of philosophy, aesthetics and reality was that they form a completely integrated, almost organic whole, and it seems that his work inter-relates in a comparable way.

Like Schiller, Hölderlin's rôle in the change from classicism to Romanticism is ambiguous, though his aesthetics probably has more affinity with his Romantic contemporary, Schlegel, than with Schiller. Hölderlin favoured an extremely broad definition of beauty. He explored some cultural and semantic aspects of poetry, and he saw aesthetic values and life in general as a work in progress, a Heraclitan simultaneity of continuous change and unity. This makes him seem like a Romantic. However, he also showed some more conservative, classical characteristics. He believed an adapted and

¹ David Constantine, *Hölderlin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p10.

elaborated version of classical genre theory could guide poetic composition; in other words, he accepted the usefulness of a rule book, and he also believed in the possibility of achieving a point of perfectly balanced and enduring harmony that could be satisfying and contemplative.

This section deals with Hölderlin's work in four main chapters. Firstly, in this chapter, we try to establish what he meant by 'Being', an omnipresent concept in his thought. Then we consider how far he believed we can know Being, and what part his conception of memory plays in the overall coherence of this philosophy. Then we look more closely at the relationship between the Platonic, Spinozan and Fichtean influences on his thought, particularly in order to judge how they affect the view of freedom and personal autonomy that he seems to have retained from the Kantian tradition. Having done this, we shall have situated his aesthetics in a philosophical context to which his poetic practice can be referred. The distinction between poetics and philosophy is not as clear as it is in Schiller, and we shall be referring to theoretical essays or fragments, and to literary works in every chapter.

We begin by tracing the development of Hölderlin's conception of Being, that grounds his general philosophy and aesthetics, and thence, human life and all other worldly existence. For humanity, this means that we all run a typical life cycle. Being is one and pre-conscious, so that, by coming into existence, and specifically, by becoming conscious and self-aware, humans lose their oneness with pure Being. While their understanding is incapable of grasping fully what they have lost, their inner drives and instincts compel them to seek a reunion with this lost state of perfect Being. Although the details and outcome of their searches vary from one individual to another, it is a universal

pattern, capable of explaining the workings of human nature. Hölderlin introduces two much-quoted expressions to characterise this pattern. The first is an astronomical metaphor, ‘the eccentric path’, likening our confused way through life to the ancient view of the unpredictability of the planetary orbits;² the second is ‘endless approximation’, a mathematical metaphor that encourages us to seek full understanding, but rejects the possibility of total comprehension.³ This rather myth-like description of the human life cycle, in which fate seems to drive us onwards in a possibly fruitless search for Being, is actually part of a coherent philosophical position. In practical terms there are two ways in which humanity can come close to understanding this all-encompassing truth. One is by appreciating the beauty of nature; since nature, including the human species, is a manifestation of Being. The second is through art, and especially through poetry. If we relate to nature in the right way, we can experience the One in All; if poetry is written in the right way, it replicates that same moment of perfect balance in which we can feel the wholeness and beauty of everything. Every human, the poet and the poet’s poetic works are three elements in an educational and developmental process that is going on within

² *die exzentrische Bahn.*

Friedrich Hölderlin, ‘Vorstufen und späte Fragmente: Fragment von *Hyperion*’, in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.83.

(ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.216.

³ Friedrich Hölderlin, ‘Vorstufen und späte Fragmente: vorletzte Fassung’, in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. 1997, p.157.

Knaupp likens this to Kant’s conception of the immortality of the soul in the *Second Critique*. See:

(ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.235.

Hölderlin also expresses his idea in more obviously mathematical terms. See: J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, ‘Hermocrates an Cephalus’, in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretischen Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.9.

the overall and ineluctable search for the restoration of lost unity. We begin by establishing what he meant by 'Being' or the 'One and All'.

In the early 1790s, Hölderlin was influenced by ideas, derived from Spinoza and Lessing, of the *en kai pan* and *alles in allem*.⁴ In 1795 (*Seyn, Urtheil...*) his argument against Fichte established the notion of Being.⁵ In *Hyperion vol. 1:II*, he mentions Heraclitus's aphorism (*das Eine in sich selber unterschiedene*).⁶ In 1800 (*Wenn der Dichter...*) he refers to the absolute *Ich*. Do we have to presume these all refer to the same thing? And if so, where does, or how can, Hölderlin provide any justification for this? Hölderlin even encourages us to accept some of these expressions as synonyms. In January 1795 he wrote to Hegel about Fichte, blandly saying, 'His absolute I (=Spinoza's substance) contains all reality...'⁷

Hölderlin's commentators have approached this topic in several ways. Dieter Henrich⁸ presumes that the notion of Being, apprehended immediately by the intellectual intuition, and justified by the argument set out in *Seyn, Urtheil...* stands alone as the fundament of Hölderlin's thought, even though he believes that 'it is in Hölderlin that Jacobi, Fichte and Schiller converge'.⁹ He also sees Hölderlin's supposed ability to apply

⁴ H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p.97.

⁵ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Seyn, Urtheil...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretischen Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.7.

⁶ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.561.

⁷ 'sein absolutes Ich (=Spinozas Substanz) enthält alle Realität...', quoted in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, fn.157:5-11, p.235.

⁸ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, (ed.), trans. David S. Pacini, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003.

⁹ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, (ed.) trans. David S. Pacini, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.80.

Fichte's philosophy to aesthetics as a vindication of Fichte.¹⁰ Manfred Frank,¹¹ perhaps showing the post-modernist tendencies identified by Frederick Beiser,¹² refers to more than one of these strands without obviously attempting to reconcile them. He also promotes the idea of the 'mystery of being', representing the unrepresentable by means of the aesthetic.¹³ Similarly, the editors of the most readily available German editions of Hölderlin's writings inform readers of the origins of the expressions used, but do not distinguish the possible differences between them.¹⁴ They accept that Hölderlin refers to the ultimate basis for all philosophy or existence in more than one way; but do not attempt to show how or whether this amounts to the same thing. Charles Larmore, too,¹⁵ seems content to use references to *Sein, Urtheil...* to explain Hölderlin's philosophical position, and, in the next section, to treat the alternative vocabularies as poetic expressions of the same idea. Jane Kneller focuses solely on the notions of Being and the intellectual intuition, and is possibly led astray as a result.¹⁶

Why does this matter? Partly because the intellectual intuition, a means by which we can know directly that Being is logically prior to everything else, in the very widest

However, in Dieter Henrich, 'Hölderlin on Judgement and Being: A study in the history of the origins of Idealism' in (ed.) Eckart Förster, *The Course of Remembrance and other Essays*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1997, p.88, Henrich acknowledges more fully the many influences on Hölderlin.

¹⁰ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, (ed.), trans. David S. Pacini, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.230.

¹¹ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, trans. Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004.

¹² Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003.

¹³ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.65.

¹⁴ This is true of Günter Mieth, Johann Kreuzer and Michael Knaupp, whose editions and commentaries have been referred to throughout the thesis.

¹⁵ Charles Larmore, 'Hölderlin and Novalis', in (ed.) Karl Ameriks, *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 141.

¹⁶ Jane E. Kneller, 'Romantic Conceptions of the Self in Hölderlin and Novalis', in (ed.) David E. Klemm and Günter Zöllner, *Figuring the Self*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, p.134.

sense, is rarely referred to in the writings that come after *Seyn, Urtheil...* and seems unlikely to be the same as the insight communicated by means of the *schöne, heilige, göttliche Empfindung*. This latter is experienced by the reader if the poet has successfully expressed the poetic spirit in a piece of work, and Hölderlin contrasts it with the loss of consciousness that comes from mere intellectual intuition.¹⁷ Secondly, because, since Being is prior to consciousness, it is unclear how we can know anything about it. Again, Hölderlin's commentators are divided as to whether we can or cannot know anything about Being. *Seyn, Urtheil...*, taken together with the reference quoted above, seem to contradict the message conveyed in *Hyperion* and in many of Hölderlin's poems. It is refreshing, therefore, to read Frederick Beiser's attempt to demonstrate how strands of Kantian, Fichtean, Platonic and Spinozan philosophy came together in Early Romanticism.¹⁸ Scholarly though Beiser's work is, however, it cannot be applied unmodified to Hölderlin, who, as a fringe member of the Romantic movement,¹⁹ does not conform with the general consensus of Romanticism. The following pages are intended to explain what some of these terms used by Hölderlin meant, what connotations they carried, where they originated, and how both he and we can be justified in believing that they express a coherent position capable of underpinning an aesthetic.

Fundamentally, Hölderlin came to philosophy through theology and a Protestant Christian upbringing. Despite any ways in which his personal religious and metaphysical orientation changed during his lifetime, he never lost the core conviction that something

¹⁷ J. Ch. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretischen Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.56.

¹⁸ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, pp.77, 131.

¹⁹ Dieter Henrich, (ed. & tr.) David S. Pacini, *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.227.

divine, which an individual could relate to as an individual and at a personal level, was present in our lives. I believe this is a constant point to bear in mind, even when evaluating his most abstract reasonings. His description of the human search for unity, recurrent in his work, always retained something reminiscent of a desire for a restoration of, or return to, God's grace, withdrawn as a result of the Fall.²⁰ The notion of Platonic *anamnesis* connected with this element of Hölderlin's thought. He read Plato's *Meno*, *Phaidros* and *The Symposium*, and *The Confessions* of the neo-Platonist, St. Augustine of Hippo.²¹ Thus, according to Plato, the human mind remembers and will eventually return to a world of perfect Forms, from which it came.²²

By 1790, Hölderlin was becoming familiar with Jacobi's views on Spinoza, and also directly with the works of Leibniz and Spinoza, and his correspondence refers to their influence on his poetry.²³ Beiser's discussion of the influence of Spinoza on the Romantic circle does not regard it as having been significant until after 1795, giving the impression that Hölderlin, Friedrich Schlegel and Schelling attempted to reconcile a newly discovered Spinoza with their basic Fichteanism.²⁴ Hölderlin's early odes, and the correspondence referred to by Harris, however, show that he already found the notion of

²⁰ Priscilla A. Hayden-Roy, 'New and Old Histories: The Case of Hölderlin and Württemberg Pietism', *Modern Languages and Literatures, Department of German Language and Literature Papers*, Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska, 1992.

available at: DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/modlanggerman/23> [accessed 13.07.08].

²¹ H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p.98.

²² J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Aphorismen' in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.19 and fn. p.121.

More detail on the extent to which Plato is relevant can be found in chapter 7 of this thesis.

²³ H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p.98.

²⁴ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, ch. 8, p.131.

Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.384ff.

the *en kai pan*, the Greek term for the One and All, as very attractive, and, as a variously expressed slogan, it appears repeatedly in his literary and theoretical works from January 1791 on.²⁵ Partly through Jacobi's work,²⁶ Hölderlin was simultaneously attracted by three aspects of Spinozism, as he understood it. The first was the basic unity of the world, or universe, and the rejection of mind / body dualism. The second was pantheism, which put mankind into intimate and pervasive relationship with God and with the world and nature in general. The third was the rejection of the subjective ego as the ultimate principle of Being.²⁷

However, what was so individual about Hölderlin's reading of Jacobi on Spinoza, was his acceptance of Jacobi's rejection of rationalism. Our identity depends on our existence, but not vice versa.²⁸ Jacobi regarded Spinoza's argument as being incompatible with non-rational religious faith, and, thus, unacceptable. However, Hölderlin combined elements of Spinoza with the Christian and Platonic metaphysics with which he was familiar. Effectively, this meant his pantheism was not strictly Spinozan, and he did not explore the notion of substance *per se*. Harris points out that Hölderlin's pantheism, and that of his hero, Lessing, was fairly compatible with orthodox Christian doctrines such as 'the God in whom we move and have our being'.²⁹ Rather

²⁵ H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p.97.

²⁶ di Giovanni, George, "Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2006 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2006/entries/friedrich-jacobi/> [accessed 13.07.08].

²⁷ More detail on Hölderlin and Spinozism can be found in chapter 8 below.

²⁸ Das Denken ist nicht die Quelle der Substanz, sondern die Substanz ist die Quelle des Denkens.

quoted in Andreas Josef Lindner, *Gefühl und Begriff: Zum Verhältnis Jacobi - Kant*, ch.2, 'Zum Spinozabuch (1785)', Dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin: Philosophie und Geisteswissenschaften, 2005. available at:

http://www.diss.fu-berlin.de/diss/receive/FUDISS_thesis_000000001537 [accessed 09.02.07].

²⁹ H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, fn. p.100.

than making substance and God identical, Hölderlin's world was pantheistic in a way rather analogous to the way in which sensible objects participate in the world of Forms, according to Plato. The presence of beauty, truth and freedom in the world around us and in ourselves shows us the omnipresence of the One and All. In other words, we prove, or demonstrate, the presence of the One and All by direct, sensuous experience, thus neatly combining Jacobi's view of religious experience, and Spinoza's pantheism. However, as well as pointing out that Hölderlin took an eclectic range of ideas from various systems, we must also investigate whether the various elements can co-exist consistently. In Hölderlin's case, the link between non-rational pantheism and religious faith might have come from Herder's influence on Schiller's poetry during the 1780s, the period in which Hölderlin's admiration for Schiller was established.³⁰ Having become familiar with these ideas of natural forces, Hölderlin was then, from Jacobi's letters to Mendelssohn, able to find a way of using Spinozism to give a more defined and easily expressed form to his idea.³¹

³⁰ Herder believed a force manifested itself in nature. Beiser regards this as a form of vitalism. See:

Frederick C Beiser, *German Idealism: The struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.366.

However, Foster's reading of Herder does not portray Herder as a vitalist. See:

(ed.) Michael N. Foster, *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.xxi.

The contentious issue is whether these thinkers were using an empirical, heuristic principle or a metaphysical principle. Herder seems to have taken a strongly empiricist approach. Hölderlin's thought was metaphysical (eg. in its religious and Platonic influences), but it seems rather misleading to claim he used the notion of a vital force. Although we shall not explore the details of Hölderlin's views on nature, biology and physics any further, I do not think this chapter and the three following suggest he was a vitalist.

³¹ There were two editions of the Spinoza letters to Mendelssohn, the first in 1785, and the second in 1789. They are summarised in:

George di Giovanni, 'Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi', in (ed.) Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2006 edition)*, available at:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2006/entries/friedrich-jacobi/> [accessed 07.04.08].

This, approximately, seems to have been Hölderlin's belief system at the time when Kant published the *Third Critique*. During the early 1790s, Hölderlin probably read the *Third Critique*,³² and also learned about Kant because his ideas were a central topic for educated discussion in the 1780s and 1790s. There seems to be no evidence that he was ever influenced by Reinhold. To Hölderlin the second half of the *Third Critique* seemed especially attractive. He had already developed, as he said in his correspondence, the habits of critically examining everything he read, and the way in which he devised a personal version of pantheism shows that he could confidently adapt and assimilate whatever he found useful in a text, without agreeing with the entire argument. Thus, his pre-existing metaphysical framework enabled him to take the apparent purposiveness of nature, that Kant observed, as further evidence of the *en kai pan*. It is at this point that the philosophical development in Hölderlin's thought becomes sharper. As had been the case for Schiller too, having read Kant he refined an aesthetic philosophy of his own. This was the task in which he engaged, alongside and in his literary output for the rest of the 1790s.

Apart from the important fact that Kant regarded the purposive appearance of natural phenomena as nothing more than a convenient metaphor employed by mankind, in order to apply a human structure to a range of phenomena outside his control, Hölderlin was able to accept much of the second half of the *Third Critique* into his view of the cosmos, without drastic revision.³³ The first half of the *Critique*, however, which dealt with judgements of taste and the nature of beauty, was less acceptable. The notion

³² Letters to Neuffer, May and July 1794, in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.257.

H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p.98.

³³ We shall return to this point below in chapter 8, which discusses Hölderlin's view of fate.

of substance, in Spinoza, and the One and All in Jacobi's letters rejected the Cartesian *cogito*, or any Kantian equivalent, as the foundation of knowledge and existence, and this had been accepted by Hölderlin. Existing, as we do, in the One and All, which also exists in us, it makes no sense to claim that things in themselves are utterly unknowable, or, as a corollary of this, that beauty is only subjectively ascribed, not present, in an object. This made him just as doubtful as Schiller about Kant's attempt to universalise the judgement of taste by reference to the *sensus communis*.

Hölderlin did not challenge the specifics of Kant's analysis of conscious perception and moral judgement, but he rejected the apparently dominant rôle Kant gave to both reason and the understanding, at the expense of sensory perception and personal feeling. In his own aesthetics Hölderlin ignored the first half of the *Third Critique*. His famous, and much quoted, letter to Neuffer,³⁴ in which he stated his intention of going beyond Kant, going even further than Schiller had dared to go, tells us, not only that he disagreed with Kant's *Analytic of the Beautiful*, but that he thought Schiller had already disposed of significant aspects of it, and that he must now engage with Schiller. Schiller had used a significantly modified model of Kantian perception and of the Kantian view of human thought processes, in order to create an aesthetic theory that gave equal weight to reason, sensation and appetite in the experience of aesthetic pleasure, and which acknowledged that the object of the aesthetic judgement had its own, non-arbitrary and distinctive part to play in exciting or attracting that judgement. By agreeing with the Spinozan / Jacobian rejection of the *cogito* and subjectivism in general, Hölderlin was

³⁴ Beck, Adolf, (ed.), *Friedrich Hölderlin, Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 6, Part 1 Briefe, Part 2 Lesarten und Erläuterungen*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1954, Letter no.88 to Neuffer, January 1794, p.137.

Referred to in: Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.388.

rejecting the subjectivist foundations of Kant too. Deprived of a subjectivist underlay, the teleological content of the second half of the *Third Critique* no longer had any requirement for an 'as if'. Hölderlin still needed some justification for believing nature genuinely has a teleological structure, but without subjectivism this nevertheless became a possibility. Thus, despite our initial claim that Hölderlin did not tamper with the epistemological or moral arguments of the Kantian *Critiques*, he accepted them only insofar as was possible in a non-subjectivist context. So far Hölderlin's response to Kant has been described in terms strictly personal to himself, someone with a prior bias towards a God-centred Christian faith, a Platonic cosmology and a somehow de-rationalised Spinozism. However, this also put him into a similar position to other critics of Kant. In the 1780s and early 1790s Jacobi, Reinhold, Fichte and Niethammer were all trying to find some further prior grounding for knowledge, beyond, behind or beneath the transcendental ego that was present in the background of Kant's system.³⁵ A little later in the decade Fichte engaged in the same enterprise, seeking a basic axiom that could underpin everything valuable in the Kantian system.

This chronological account is now nearing the key date in Hölderlin's career at which the independently developing components of his philosophical thought would come together successfully. One of Jacobi's objections to rationalism was that it inverted the purpose of reason.³⁶ Reason is a tool that enables mankind to live in the world; it is not a mould into which worldly evidence must be crushed, in order to create an elegantly argued system. This was the origin of the Jacobian exhortation to perform the *salto*

³⁵ Dieter Henrich, (ed. & tr.) David S. Pacini, *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, pp.117, 125.

³⁶ George di Giovanni, 'Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi', in (ed.) Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2006 edition)*, available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2006/entries/friedrich-jacobi/> [accessed 07.04.08].

mortale, which he had urged originally on Lessing, and which was the theme of his disagreement with the critical philosophy, in his eyes the inheritor of the rationalist tradition.³⁷ Therefore Jacobi not only disagreed with many contemporaries, but articulated his own view of the world in a way that included a substantial amount of possibly idiosyncratic theology, not susceptible of rational formulation. Up until 1795 Hölderlin's methodology was proceeding according to ideas gained from Jacobi. Beiser, however, tells us that, in the early 1790s, Hölderlin rejected the idea of the *salto mortale*, but later rethought his position.³⁸ I disagree here with Beiser, in that the early Hölderlin was not influenced by the dominant rationalistic tradition, unless we include Plato, whose philosophy he used selectively. He never tried to reason the world into existence, though he was not irrational or inconsistent.

Therefore, contrary to Beiser, I would claim that it was in 1795 that Hölderlin performed a quite different 'reverse flip' of his own, prompted by Kant. Hölderlin became very interested in current strands in Kantianism. He became one of Fichte's students,³⁹ and, almost experimentally, though perhaps not intentionally so, began to play the game of the critical philosophy. Reserving to one side his already extant non-subjectivist pre-conceptions, he followed and reflected critically on Fichte's attempts to ground the cosmos in the *Ich / Nicht-Ich* relational term. In addition, he read the draft for Schelling's *Vom Ich*, and understood the implications of the *Ich=Ich* statement of

³⁷ The *salto mortale* (literally 'deadly jump', but used to refer to a 'back somersault') was the expression Jacobi used when he urged Lessing to abandon Spinozan rationalism and take a leap of faith back to belief in a personal God, freedom, and common sense.

³⁸ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.384.

³⁹ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.386.

identity.⁴⁰ In his 1794/95 manuscript fragment, *Seyn, Urtheil...*,⁴¹ that set out his account of the priority of *Sein* he worked out an argument that plausibly identified the presupposition that lay behind the critical philosophy. There he exposed the non-relational presupposition that must subsist as a pre-conceptual axiom, prior to any objective / subjective dichotomy. He confirmed his objections to Fichte's subjectivist philosophical foundations in a letter to Hegel, based on Fichte's lectures on the

Wissenschaftslehre:

...I am, as such, necessarily limited, even if only in time, and thus not absolutely. And so no consciousness in the absolute I is thinkable. As absolute, I have no consciousness. And to the extent that I have no consciousness, to that extent I am nothing (for myself) - and so the Absolute is nothing (for me).⁴²

Thus, as the early drafts of *Hyperion*, written either immediately before or during Hölderlin's attendance at Fichte's lectures,⁴³ show, consistently with *Seyn, Urtheil...*, consciousness presupposes opposition, whereas the absolute is unconscious.

⁴⁰ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, pp.88, 98.

⁴¹ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Seyn, Urtheil...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.7.

⁴² Letter of 26.01.1795, quoted and translated in Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York, 2004, p.114.

These sentiments are confirmed in Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufen und späte Fragmente: metrische Fassung', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Hyperion'*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.114.

⁴³ dating taken from Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.116.

Both Henrich, who originally discovered this manuscript,⁴⁴ and Frank⁴⁵ regard *Seyn, Urtheil...* as central to Hölderlin's philosophy. Jacobi had already stated that Being must be revealed in an immediate feeling, or in 'unmediated consciousness'; this, to him, was the absolute.⁴⁶ In this text, however, Hölderlin's view of Being as something unconditioned has no Jacobian religious connotations. He establishes an ultimate axiomatic premiss that could underpin both Fichte's *Ich / Nicht-Ich* formula and, also, like Reinhold earlier in the decade, Kant's conception of the transcendental ego and the unknowable noumenal world. Hölderlin explains what, by definition, can only be known immediately, unconditioned by knowledge in a Kantian sense. He does so by reference to the immediate intellectual intuition, an expression that Schelling and Hölderlin used, to mean something of which the intellect is immediately conscious, without reference to concepts or senses.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, (ed.) (tr.), David S. Pacini Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.292. Henrich discovered this manuscript fragment, known as *Seyn, Urtheil...*

⁴⁵ see Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.97.

Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, (ed.) (tr.) David S. Pacini, Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, lecture 19, p.279.

(ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, 'Einleitung', p. XIII.

see also: Andrzej Warminski, *Readings in Interpretation: Hölderlin, Hegel, Heidegger*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp.6, 7.

⁴⁶ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, Lecture 4, pp.77, 78.

⁴⁷ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.104.

Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.393.

By intuition Kant too had meant what we are immediately conscious of.⁴⁸ Thus, an intuition was essentially a function of the senses and, as the precursor of perception, also of experience, unmediated by the processes of conceptualisation; the intellect is a function of reason. For Kant, then, the notion of intellectual intuition demonstrated the impossibility of knowing anything about the noumenal self.⁴⁹ By becoming aware of ourselves as reflecting subject, we cast ourselves in the role of object, and raise the question of what we, the reflecting subject, might be. Kant took the circularity of this argument, always presupposing the existence of the entity we are seeking to identify, to show that the noumenal self, ie. the self that is the source of our ability to act as a self-determining subject, is essentially unknowable.⁵⁰ However, Hölderlin, as we shall go on later to claim, firstly did not accept that conceptualisation is the only way of acquiring knowledge, and secondly, distinguished Being from the self completely.

Any statement of identity, even the *Ich=Ich* identity claim that Schelling made just weeks before Hölderlin wrote his fragment,⁵¹ makes some kind of mental separation, even between an *Ich* and the same *Ich*. Consciousness of anything, including self-consciousness, presupposes a subject / object dichotomy. 'If I *know* the other *as* myself, a pre-objective knowledge must underlie and authenticate this object-knowledge.'⁵² Thus,

⁴⁸ cf. Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.104.

⁴⁹ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.299.

⁵⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.297.

⁵¹ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.98.

⁵² Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.107.

Hölderlin was effectively asking, “What could precede consciousness ‘of?’” Answer: absolute Being.

Hölderlin then turns to the second term of the fragment’s title: *Urtheil*. This means ‘judgement’, and, in English translation, seems superficially to be an unlikely choice of concept for him to have opposed to the notion of Being, but both he and Fichte⁵³ did so on the basis of a mistaken etymology of the German word. In order to become self-conscious, or to distinguish the *Ich* from the *Nicht Ich*, (or even *Ich=Ich*) we make a judgement. We judge what is me and what is the rest of the world. We judge the extent to which we ourselves are part of the world, and we judge ourselves as if we were part of that world. Simultaneously, and in doing so, we make that separation to which Hölderlin referred. That, then, is the next step that takes us forward into conscious knowledge of ourselves and the world around us. It is the *Ur-* (=original) *Theilung* (=division). Judgement, or *Urtheil*, is therefore preceded by the pre-conscious condition of absolute Being, which can only be known immediately – if at all - by the intellectual intuition. Absolute Being precedes any divisions of form and content, objectivity or subjectivity, or any conceptions of self, but it underlies everything. If, for a moment, we move away from Hölderlin’s quite strictly analytical approach in *Seyn, Urtheil..*, we can compare *Urtheil* with his reference to ‘*das große Wort... des Heraclit*’ in *Hyperion*.⁵⁴ Division in the world and consciousness in the self nevertheless presuppose an original unity. As Frank puts it:

⁵³ Frank quotes an extract from one of Fichte’s lectures.:

Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.103.

⁵⁴ We have drawn attention to this elsewhere also. The reference is:

Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main / Leipzig, 1999, p.559.

‘Here, [ie. in *Seyn, Urtheil...*] even before idealism spread its wings, the self-sufficiency of consciousness is contested, in solidarity with Jacobi. ...It is not consciousness that determines Being, but Being that determines consciousness. ...In this sketch of the argument... we have the first consummate expression of what I call “early Philosophical Romanticism” - not the dismissal of the theme of self-consciousness, but rather, its relegation to a status secondary to that of Being.’⁵⁵

In philosophical terms, by doing this, Hölderlin has pushed back beyond any ‘first principle’, just as any contemporary critic of Kant would have wished. But he has done so without tempting us into any potentially infinite regress in search of an even more fundamental principle, the problem faced by all philosophies of first principle. He also resolved the problem of how a first principle could be different in kind from what philosophers might wish to deduce from it. Being transcends consciousness, and leaves us, as conscious creatures, unable to describe or explore it adequately, even though we continue to use our understanding to pursue this infinite task.⁵⁶ In fact, we shall see that Hölderlin does not limit humanity only to using the understanding for this purpose. We obsessively use every means of thinking and feeling in order to become aware of or explore Being. The primary condition of Being precedes and unites subjectivity and objectivity. Indeed, it is very hard to separate out discussion of the significance of Being from discussion of every other aspect of what Hölderlin wrote throughout the 1790s.

However, while *Seyn, Urtheil...* may have exposed an axiomatic pre-supposition, it did not in itself demonstrate that Being was anything more than a necessary, logical assumption, and it was not a proof of existence. One of the aims of Hölderlin’s theory of

⁵⁵ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.107.

J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, ‘*Seyn, Urtheil...*’, in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, pp.7,8.

⁵⁶ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.108.

poetry is to eliminate the subjective grounding set up by the Kantian aesthetics and its theory of nature. A presupposition inherent in our subjective reasoning could not in itself achieve this. If we were to try and separate or distinguish Being, or distinguish the essence of anything from Being, this would destroy its unity.⁵⁷ Only immediate, unmediated, unconditioned Being meets the criteria of absolute unity, as is also the case in intellectual intuition.⁵⁸ Frank is perturbed by these two statements, especially since Hölderlin took his terminology from Spinoza and Jacobi who both had a conception of Being that was thicker than an 'intellectual intuition'.⁵⁹ However, although *Seyn, Urtheil...* is itself expressed in analytical terms, for Hölderlin the logical priority of *Sein* was a presupposition that brought together the critical philosophy and his pantheistic background belief in the *en kai pan*, that he was able to live, and which he saw confirmed around him every day, in just the way Jacobi might have wished.⁶⁰ Thus, without Hölderlin's already existing cosmological or metaphysical conception of the nature of the world and existence, the presupposition of Being would have been nothing more than that, but, since the more theological side of Hölderlin's thought cohered with the implications he had newly recognised in the critical philosophy, the two positions confirmed each other.

Having reached a synthesis of this kind, Hölderlin's subsequent philosophical thought was an amplification of detail. A partial early draft of his novel, *Hyperion*, was

⁵⁷ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Seyn, Urtheil...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.7.

⁵⁸ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Seyn, Urtheil...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.7.

⁵⁹ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p. 125.

⁶⁰ Though, of course, Jacobi himself was not involved, or even interested in, these intellectual developments personally.

published in Schiller's periodical, *Thalia*, in 1794. Frank points out that a passage in the introduction, that refers to the resolution of the varied conflicts that drive us through life in search of peace, may seem to anticipate the condition of being *harmoniscentgegengesetzt*, that Hölderlin later described,⁶¹ but that, since it pre-dates *Seyn, Urtheil...*, that passage does not reflect Hölderlin's considered conclusion regarding the nature of the ultimate unity.⁶² However, according to the timescale suggested here, *Seyn, Urtheil...* did not change Hölderlin's interpretation of life. The poems and all post-'95 versions of *Hyperion* fit the same scenario, as also do his analysis of time, and his poetology. *Seyn, Urtheil...* provides a logical justification for 'pantheism', but the living, moving and omnipresent divine, in which Hölderlin had long believed, is still, nevertheless, like a metaphorical shimmer that occasionally catches the light of thought, reason or experience, and reveals the enormity of existence to us. From Kant and from Schiller, Hölderlin gained the notion of the importance of harmony and balance. From Kant, Schiller and Fichte he gained the imagery of opposition and productive conflict. He adjusted and adapted these factors to construct his own multi-relational notion of harmonious opposition, reinforced by the contemporary organic theory of the natural sciences.⁶³ Whatever specific doctrines influenced Hölderlin, however, he situated them firmly in the simultaneously pantheistic and logical framework of all-encompassing

⁶¹ J. Ch. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.43.

This essay was not written until about 1800.

⁶² Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.116.

⁶³ Frederick C Beiser, *German Idealism: The struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.366.

See also chapter 9 below.

Being; a framework acquired before 1795, and which he continued to explore in his literary work until his breakdown in 1805.

If Hölderlin is to be taken seriously as an aesthetic thinker, it must be possible to integrate the several strands of thought that influenced him. Some commentators have tended to present him as a man in touch with a supernatural, inexpressible and tantalisingly unreachable 'One and All' that merges into the Platonic World of Forms, the Christian God and the gods of antiquity.⁶⁴ On this account he would become an appropriate candidate for criticism in the same terms that Kant levelled against Swedenborg, as a pedlar of *Schwärmerei*,⁶⁵ much as Kneller does.⁶⁶ On the other hand, commentators from the generation of Henrich and Frank were excited by the discovery of the *Seyn, Urtheil...* manuscript, and have emphasised the logical status of Being and the way Hölderlin thought this resolved the post-Kantian search for axiomatic foundations. They thus elevate Hölderlin as a philosophical thinker in the Kantian / idealist tradition. While Frank believes that *Seyn, Urtheil...* provides the missing piece that enables us to make sense of ideas hinted at in Hölderlin's creative work, he also emphasises the unknowability of Being. In fact, he is not really able to explain how this notion of Being relates to Hölderlin's poetry at all. *Seyn, Urtheil...* sets up a notion of pre-conscious Being that, *prima facie*, has no practical implications for poetry, life, nature or the way

⁶⁴ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.126.

Stefanie Hölscher, 'Schiller and Hölderlin: from Beauty to Religion', in *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, vol.LXXV, part ii, 2006.

⁶⁵ Martin Schönfeld, "Kant's Philosophical Development", in (ed.) Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2007 Edition)*. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2007/entries/kant-development/> [accessed 15.07.08].

⁶⁶ Jane E. Kneller, 'Romantic Conceptions of the Self', in (ed.) David E. Klemm & Günther Zöllner, *Figuring the Self*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1997.

life is lived. Neither does it explain why mankind should wish to return to the state of Being - or indeed, why anyone should think we 'came' from Being in anything other than a logical sense in the first place.

Yet the notions of going forth and returning to are central motifs in Hölderlin's *œuvre*. Kneller's article, misguidedly, I believe, claims that Hölderlin's search for reconciliation in life is ultimately a search for oblivion, but at least she shows what a strange doctrine Hölderlin would appear to be propounding, if *Seyn, Urtheil...* were the key to everything he wrote. In Hölderlin's poems and *Hyperion*, however, the One and All, which Beiser is inclined to use as an expression interchangeable with Being, and which we may presume Frank also thought synonymous with Being, clearly has a standing that makes it relevant to our perception of the world, and which pervades the life we lead and the nature of the universe, and which, in addition, has some kind of normative relevance to the kind of life we should choose to live. We cannot ignore the passages in Hölderlin in which he points to our ability to have experiences of the One and All, and to the way in which we come close to knowing it. It is clearly something more than a logical presupposition.

When Hölderlin stated that he wished to go further than Kant, one way in which he appears to have intended this statement to be taken, is that he wanted to avoid the 'as if' in the *Third Critique*. He wanted to show that the two views, firstly that objects possess the quality of, for instance, beauty and, secondly, that nature has purpose, are more than metaphor, and rest on something more than an argument from analogy. So long as aesthetics, whether for audience or creative artist, originates solely in the subject, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to do this. One of the consequences of having

explained how the pure Being of *Seyn, Urtheil...* is integrated with the notion of the One and All, is that any similarities between the behaviour of mankind (including the production of art), and nature (including the beauties of God's natural creation) become structural, rather than analogous, thus fulfilling Hölderlin's intentions. His theory of history flows into his theory of poetry and into the lessons for life exemplified in his writings. It has to be said that the account of the One and All, abandoning as it does the rational tradition within which it was first set out by Spinoza, lacks some logical rigour, in just the same way that *Seyn, Urtheil...* lacks any practical dimension. But, given that religious belief of any kind can have an acceptable place in the human world, Hölderlin has succeeded in fusing the rather disparate elements in his intellectual background into a theory of general philosophical and aesthetic unity. The next chapter will consider the role of memory within this general philosophy, so that we may then examine the further implications arising from Hölderlin's rejection of the Kantian 'as if', and how he dealt with them.

CHAPTER 7

MEMORY, AND ITS STRUCTURAL RÔLE IN HÖLDERLIN'S
PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

Our discussion of Hölderlin's conception of Being, and its relationship to the One and All, has already begun to establish the coherence of Hölderlin's general philosophy, by considering whether Being is a common sense presumption, a logical axiom, a religious concept, or an entity with some other kind of ontological status. Several commentators have questioned whether or not Hölderlin claimed we could have knowledge of Being. Frank¹ and Larmore² claim that Being cannot be an object of knowledge. Larmore notes that, if it were so, this would distinguish it from the knowing subject, whereas it is supposed to be a condition that cannot be distinguished from anything in any way. However, as he also says

Precisely the unknowability of Being, however, is what Hölderlin wanted to establish... Being can only be a presupposition that we adopt to make sense of the possibility of reflection... it functions as a ground, not as a principle. We cannot begin with an understanding of Being, and deduce the characteristic features of our relation to the world.

This quotation contradicts our implicit claim that Hölderlin was urging us to find out about Being,³ and raises a question about whether it is determinate or indeterminate in status. The way in which Hölderlin introduces the notion of Being, in *Seyn, Urtheil...*, seems to confirm the unknowability claim set out in the above quotation. The 'I' cannot create awareness, and cannot create or provide awareness of any absolute, because, by definition, we cannot demand conditioned, conscious knowledge of what is

¹ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.125.

² Charles Larmore, 'Hölderlin and Novalis', in (ed.) Karl Ameriks, *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.148.

³ See chapter 6 above.

unconditioned and pre-conscious, and thus, also, is neither objective nor subjective.⁴ We cannot reflect on the pre-conscious, or it will at once lose its immediacy, and become a mediated, conscious, conditioned concept. Frank considers that Hölderlin follows both Jacobi and Kant in saying that Being is the quintessence of all actuality and is not grasped by thought, but is rather like an idea in the Kantian sense, to which all concepts are inadequate. According to Frank, Hölderlin later used the ‘aesthetic intuition’ to address the ‘cognitive gap’ that this left.⁵

Indeed, Cassirer and Kneller thought Hölderlin had unwittingly described a self-defeating life cycle such that we perish in oblivion at the very moment of acquaintance with Being.⁶ Beiser, however, thought Hölderlin was claiming that we could know Being, but, nevertheless, not in Kant’s strictly cognitive sense. I think it must be admitted that the time and page space Hölderlin devoted to the topic of humans who see, or somehow come to know ‘the gods’,⁷ ‘Mother Nature’⁸ or the One and All,⁹ as revealed in beauty, oblige us to agree with Beiser that human beings can know Being. But we could easily interpret this special sense that Hölderlin seems to reserve for our way of knowing Being

⁴ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.80.

⁵ Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.100.

⁶ Kneller, Jane E., ‘Romantic Conceptions of the Self in Hölderlin and Novalis’, in (ed.) David E. Klemm and Günter Zöllner, *Figuring the Self*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, p.144.

⁷ See, for instance, ‘Die Unerkannte’ (1796), and ‘An den Äther’ (1797), in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, pp. 170 & 182.

⁸ See, for instance, An die Natur, (‘die Seele der Natur’) (1794/95), and Diotima, (‘Mutter Erde’) (1796), in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, pp.164 & 173.

⁹ ‘Was ist der Menschen Leben? - ein Bild der Gottheit...’, in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.384.

This fragment is dated as ‘very uncertain’ but after 1800 by Schmidt, and at about 1807 by Hans Jürgen Balmes, in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Gesammelte Werke*, (ed.) Hans Jürgen Balmes, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008.

as problematical and even mysterious.¹⁰ To resolve these difficulties, first we shall discuss Being, in relation to Plato's theory of Forms, and then we shall show the importance of Hölderlin's explanation of change and the passage of time in *Das untergehende Vaterland*, as it relates to the rôle of memory.¹¹ Doing so will also take us a little closer to understanding Hölderlin's aesthetic theory.

Plato has already been acknowledged as one of the sources for Hölderlin's philosophical thought.¹² Perhaps we now need to consider whether there is a similarity that we have so far neglected between the way we come to know about Being, and Plato's theory of the Forms.

Aber weder unser Wissen noch unser Handeln gelangt in irgend einer Periode des Daseyns dahin, wo aller Widerstreit aufhört, wo Alles Eins ist; die bestimmte Linie vereinigt sich mit der unbestimmten nur in unendlicher Annäherung.

Wir hätten auch keine Ahnung von jenem unendlichen Frieden, von jenem Seyn, im einzigen Sinne des Worts, wir strebten gar nicht, die Natur mit uns zu vereinigen, wir dächten und wir handelten nicht, es wäre überhaupt gar nichts, (für uns) wir wären selbst nichts, (für uns) wenn nicht dennoch jene unendliche Vereinigung, jenes Seyn, im einzigen Sinne des Worts vorhanden wäre. Es ist vorhanden – als Schönheit; es wartet, um mit Hyperion zu reden, ein neues Reich auf uns, wo die Schönheit Königin ist.

Ich glaube, wir werden am Ende alle sagen: heiliger Plato, vergieb! man hat schwer an dir gesündigt.¹³

¹⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.65.

Here Beiser is quite scathing about Frank who, he says typifies aesthetic experience as a kind of 'suprarationalism', like an 'inscrutable awareness of "the mystery of Being", which somehow presents the unrepresentable only by virtue of the inexhaustible interpretability of a work of art.' Frank thus overlooks the influence of Plato and *Naturphilosophie*, and gives an 'obscurantist view' derived from Heidegger.

¹¹ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.33ff.

¹² Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.77ff.

Beiser even claims Hölderlin consciously revived Platonism in opposition to Kantianism.

Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism 1781 - 1801*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch. 2, pp. 393ff.

¹³ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufe und späte Fragmente: vorletzte Fassung', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Hyperion'*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.157.

Knaupp's notes to this extract refer to a letter, in which Hölderlin tells Neuffer the discussion of *Phaidros* in his analytic of beauty and the sublime will simplify Kant in some respects, but also add to him.¹⁴ This encourages us to think of the condition of wholeness and perfection towards which we strive, but never fully attain, and which Hölderlin identifies with the One and All, as equivalent to the relationship between *anamnesis* and the access our intellect has to Plato's World of Forms.

However, there are ambiguities in Hölderlin's conception, because, in *Seyn, Urtheil...*, *Seyn* seemed to be a Kantian or Fichtean precondition of human thought. Therefore, if Hölderlin indicated that poetry and the other arts could reintroduce us to a perfection from which we had originated, this would be like ascribing some kind of desirable character to the Kantian transcendental world, and would be a claim to have

But neither our knowledge nor our actions succeed, at any period of our existence, in reaching where all strife ceases and everything is One; the determinate line only unites itself with the indeterminate in endless approximation.

If we also had no awareness [= memory + presentiment (tr.)] of that endless peace, of that Being, in the only sense of the word, we would not strive at all to unite nature with ourselves, we would not think and act, it [Being] would be absolutely nothing at all (for us), we ourselves would be nothing (for us) unless, nevertheless, that endless union, that Being, in the only sense of the word, were present. It is present - as beauty; a new kingdom, if we may use Hyperion's words, is waiting for us, in which Beauty is Queen.

I believe in the end we shall all say: Holy Plato, forgive us! We have sinned against you sorely.

Hölderlin wrote to Hegel in early 1794 that his reading at that time consisted of Kant and the Greeks.

See: Adolf Beck (ed.), *Friedrich Hölderlin, Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 6, Part 1 Briefe, Part 2 Lesarten und Erläuterungen*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1954, Letter to Hegel, no.84, pp. 127, 683.

¹⁴ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufe und späte Fragmente: vorletzte Fassung', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, Hyperion*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, editorial note, p.236.

Knaupp believes this is a reference to the myth in *Phaidros* where the pre-embodied soul rides through the heavens as a horse, harnessed to Zeus's chariot, and there sees true Being as beauty. Therefore wise people remember this experience as soon as they encounter something beautiful.

The letter appears in full in: (ed.) Adolf Beck, *Friedrich Hölderlin, Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 6, Part 1 Briefe, Part 2 Lesarten und Erläuterungen*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1954, Letter no.84, p.127.

see also: (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, Hyperion*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.216.

revealed some content in what Kant referred to as the noumenal realm. Contrary to the critical philosophy, the transcendental would then have acquired a more developed ontological status than Kant thought possible. If Hölderlin intended to open up the world of Being by means of the intellectual intuition, he would also appear to be negating his claim that it was undetermined. By intruding into and exploring it, surely mankind cannot avoid making it determinate, even though its full nature remains beyond our capacity to understand.

Once we describe the enterprise in this way, Being once again comes closer to acquiring the perfection and attractiveness of the World of Forms, and our efforts to attain it resemble our intellect's supposed ability to access Plato's World of Forms, especially since, like Plato, Hölderlin did not take the 'I' as his philosophical starting point. Thus, our worldly experience of beauty as a glimpse of the One and All (Being), is rather like recognising the presence of Platonic beauty in the world of the senses. Every object of sense shares something of the Forms, so we already begin to gain an imperfect understanding of true beauty and the world of Forms, by observing the sensible world. Beiser points out that, in Plato's *Phaedrus* and *The Symposium*, it is by perceiving beauty that we obtain any knowledge of the Forms.¹⁵ The World of Forms 'contains' 'information' without which we would live a poor and incomplete life, but, despite the enrichment and benefit that philosophers gain by seeking the Forms, we and they only ever approach to knowledge of them. Hölderlin's image of mankind's eccentric path through life would be just as well suited as a way of explaining our relationship to Plato's

¹⁵ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.61. For the purpose of this discussion he includes Hölderlin among the German Romantics.

World of Forms - 'unendliche Annäherung'.¹⁶ There would be something paradoxical in this, however. Plato confidently tells us what is in the World of Forms, how we should access it, and, virtually, that it is our duty to do so. Plato is quite specific that the World of Forms is the intelligible realm, where the archetypes of the sensible realm are present. However, this was not the way in which Hölderlin suggests Being can be accessible. We do not have to refer to Being continually, in order to verify our concepts or perceptions and their relation to the Forms. Beauty, as we perceive it, *is* Being. The mainstay of Hölderlin's thought is that the 'world' of Being is not merely non-physical, but also pre-conscious, and is not accessed by any method that involves consciousness. If Hyperion is typical, we are engaged in a rather unpredictable personal inner struggle or exploration if we seek to attain knowledge of it.

Hölderlin's view of Being is therefore unlike Plato's view of a World of Forms, accessed by means of the understanding alone. In fact, following St. Augustine, Hölderlin tells us that the understanding, acting alone, far from opening our eyes to beauty, can lead us to despair.¹⁷ Thus, our comparison between Being and the World of Forms fails; Hölderlin is not claiming that our understanding accesses the Forms, and there is no suggestion that the concepts by means of which we obtain discursive knowledge derive from Forms; Being is inaccessible to the understanding. Beiser's argument, widening

¹⁶ 'Endless approximation'. The term apparently originated in a Neo-platonic commentary on Euclid's geometry. See

Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufe und späte Fragmente: vorletzte Fassung', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Hyperion'*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, editorial note, p.235.

¹⁷J. Ch. Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Aphorismen', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.19, and editor's notes, p.121.

Perhaps this claim is complicated, however, by the fact that Augustine is often referred to as a neo-Platonist.

Plato's notion of intellect to include the reason as a whole seeks to equate Hölderlin's and Schlegel's view of rational human thought processes with Plato's intellect.¹⁸ However, this is not convincing, because, despite his admiration for Plato, Hölderlin does not share his high regard for the capacities of the intellect, or understanding, working alone and without feeling. Admittedly, the beauty of the One and All (Being) is present in and becomes knowable in the world around us, just as Plato believed particulars participated in the Forms, but Hölderlin rejected Platonic dualism. For him, Being is intrinsic in the world around us. There is no inferior sensible world; if anything, the entire cosmos is elevated through its inclusion in the One and All.

Our world, like Plato's unreliable sensible realm, is forever changing, but this is not a weakness. It is because everything that is done, thought or exists originates in a flow of changes, a becoming, shifting from one extreme of ideality or reality to the other. All reality is rooted in a set of previous circumstances. Every moment has its origin and end in another, in both the next and the previous moments.¹⁹ Hölderlin tells us that by 'untergehend', which usually means sinking, he also means 'übergehend', 'crossing', 'transitional', or 'passing'.²⁰ Present reality is by definition the transition from future, whether real or ideal, to past, whether real or ideal, finite or infinite. Hölderlin defines human life at any present moment in which we live, as representing a fleeting balance between the finite and the infinite, the real and the ideal. We gain reality from the having-been-present, ie. the past; and from the about-to-be, ie. the future. *Wechselwirken*,

¹⁸ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.60.

¹⁹ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.49.

²⁰ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.33ff.

alternating change, or reciprocity, a term familiar from Schiller, and which Schiller may also have borrowed from Fichte,²¹ establishes the point among these determinants at which Hölderlin says we are *harmoniscentgegensetzt*.²² However, unlike the reciprocal action between competing drives that Schiller and Fichte imagined, and which Schiller sees as being, in certain conditions, within human control, Hölderlin's 'reciprocity' is a more multi-dimensional, or fluid re-adjustment that continually creates and re-creates unified harmony from among at least two, but possibly more, opposing and irreconcilable components.²³ The present moment is a split second of indeterminacy, an interface between *Seyn* and *Nichtseyn*, as the ideal possible becomes the future real, then the past real, and then the ideal past; it is an experience of both the present and of Being, but fortunately, it is always a moment of transition, and not of real resolution. If it were real, we would be 'stuck in the present' (my expression). The real components would annul themselves, cancel themselves out, dissolve themselves (*sich auflösen*). It would be a real nothingness. It would be a complete cessation; and, for us, would be oblivion, loss of consciousness and nothingness, a '*reales Nichts*'.²⁴ There would be no possibility of reference either forwards into future possibility, or back into an experienced or ideal past. What we therefore seek is an ideal resolution that does not preclude any of these various possibilities. Kreuzer calls this a philosophy of history, the implications of which for the

²¹ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XIII; §2fn., p.85.

See chapter 3 above.

²² J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.43.

²³ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.46.

²⁴ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.36.

free imitation of art, and for poetical practice are developed in *Wenn der Dichter einmal...*,²⁵ since the same process is at work in the writing of a poem.

This seems to be a real departure from Kant's view of time. In Kant an existing self structured its perceptions by using the schemata that originated in its own way of thinking. Hölderlin, however, makes time constitutive of activity and of existence. We can recognise aspects here of the great difference between Fichte and Kant, namely Fichte's rejection of the pre-existing self, and his account of the self-creating self.²⁶

the self endeavours to unite the irreconcilable, now attempting to receive the infinite in the form of the finite, now, baffled, positing it again outside the latter [ie. the finite], and in that very moment seeking once more to entertain it under the form of finitude - this is the power of imagination.²⁷

This process, Henrich says, is not an attempt by the self to eliminate the not-self, but a self-referring process. Sometimes, Fichte does not portray this process as a serious contest, but as playful activity, as *schweben*, a kind of hovering and wavering within the *Ich*. Fichte wished to convey that the determinate *Ich* exists only in so far as it is active. The self, in Fichte, both exists and is known in its activity; and the imagination's continual, flickering transition between *Ich* and *Nicht-Ich* is intrinsically bound with time and therefore has an essential temporal dimension. The flow of time is the same thing as the annihilation and immediate restoration of any finite state of mind. No sensation is merely momentary, it is continued. The mind therefore always foresees the future and is

²⁵ (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, Introduction, p.XXVIIIff.

²⁶ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, p.212.

²⁷ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, (ed.) Reinhard Lauth and Hans Jacob, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1965, pp. 358-359, quoted in Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, p.212.

related to it. Thus mind, imagination and sensation all have a temporal structure.²⁸ Thus also, Hölderlin's attempt to portray a constantly fleeting reality in *Das untergehende Vaterland...* itself subsumes an explanation of time and existence derived from the Fichtean philosophy.²⁹

If all the elements in Hölderlin's aesthetics are to be assembled, the next feature that must be added to this account of the self in time is Hölderlin's idea of the communal soul. The claim that there is in any sense a communal soul originated in Kant's *Third Critique*, where he states that the existence of a basic *sensus communis* is demonstrated when we, as it were, hold up our judgement to human reason as a whole, in the expectation that aesthetic judgements are universal.³⁰ Fichte is more explicit about how shared responses are possible, when he explains the way the hovering self-consciousness of the mind contributes to a cultural consciousness, by referring to a general human mind.³¹ Hölderlin also makes a serious attempt to explain how shared responses and reactions could come about. He first refers to this phenomenon when he tells us that the social interaction of a shared life makes it possible for each of us to contribute our own

²⁸ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, p.213.

²⁹ Although Hölderlin does not equate change with instability, Nicholas Saul characterises the Romantic subject in a way that has some similarities with these ideas: 'Fixed in a deeply ironic relation to being and reality, it becomes a fundamentally unstable construct, oscillating between something and nothing.'

Nicholas Saul, 'The pursuit of the subject: literature as critic and perfecter of philosophy', in (ed.) Nicholas Saul, *Modern German Literature and Philosophy 1700-1990*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.71.

Hölderlin does not treat irony as an important aesthetic concept, but in chapter 11 below, we shall see how Friedrich Schlegel emphasised the shifting instabilities of such oscillations as a central concept in all aspects of aesthetic evaluation.

³⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:293, §40, p.173.

³¹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 'Lectures concerning the scholar's vocation (1784)', in *Early Philosophical Writings*, (ed.) trans. Daniel Breazeale, Ithaca NY; London, Cornell University Press, 1993, p.147.

and see above, chapter 6.

idea or experience of divinity, and thus gain from others a fuller and more adequate idea of God.³² In this way we come to know that there is such a thing as a communal soul; it is our 'feeling for life'.³³ For individuals, change comes about as the self hovers between the poles of past and future, between Being and Not-Being. If aggregated, this process encompasses a whole community's 'self', and the temporal activity of the communal soul, or society, becomes equivalent to change in general. Reinforcing this explanation from another angle, if pure Being is *Stillstand*, or *Ruhepunkt*,³⁴ any kind of consciousness, feeling or living can be characterised as change. Thus, the communal soul is also our feeling for and understanding of the transition between future and past, ideal and real, and represents change itself in general.³⁵

Having set out Hölderlin's account of what it is to exist, and thus, what it is to experience time, I shall now consider how it is that in our everyday life, and as a result of all this, we are able to 'know' Being, which can be regarded also as an alternative way of conceiving of the One and All.³⁶ The conclusion will be that we do so through the operation of memory. Since change is essential to human consciousness and experience, a process such as memory has significance, in so far as it captures or makes sense of the constant flow of change. Without memory, consciousness of each present moment would otherwise provide us only with a disconnected series of infinitely brief experiences,

³² J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Fragmente philosophischer Briefe', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.10.

³³ Selbstgefühl des lebendigen

(ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, Introduction, p.XXVII.

³⁴ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Fragment Philosophischer Briefe', 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in *Theoretische Schriften*, pp.12, 41.

³⁵ (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, Introduction, p.XXVIII.

³⁶ See chapter 6 above.

rather like the *Atomreihe* that Hölderlin tells us is typical of unstructured or poorly conceived literary work.³⁷ Indeed, as Kreuzer tells us, for Hölderlin memory grounds the poetic life in time and determines it temporally.³⁸ In both life and literature it enables us to recognise the existence of process and continuity. Self-reference itself can take place only in the context of memory, and this is what happens also when the *Ich* makes its connection with the external world, the '*freie Wahl eines Objekts*'.³⁹ Anything that is temporally situated can be whole only if the series of fleeting moments can be held simultaneously, even if only briefly.

Im Zustande zwischen Seyn und Nichtseyn wird aber überall das Mögliche real, und das wirkliche ideal, und diß ist in der freien Kunstmachung ein furchtbarer aber göttlicher Traum.⁴⁰

This is the key extract from *Das untergehende Vaterland* on which Kreuzer believes *Wenn der Dichter einmal...* builds. It shows that the artist or writer somehow has to capture the transition between Being and Not-Being, the essence of every present moment. In just the same way that the present disappears at exactly the same moment it becomes real, so too the poet treads a perilously close line between success and despair.

The object which poetic individuality chooses in order to make itself perceptible, and which makes poetic self-reference possible, is language. Only in the form of

³⁷J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.49.

³⁸(ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, Introduction, p.XXIX.

³⁹(ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, Introduction, p.XXX.

⁴⁰J. Ch. F. Hölderlin, 'Das untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.34:

In the condition between Being and Not-Being the possible everywhere becomes real, and the real becomes ideal; and in free artistic imitation this is a dreadful but divine dream.

language can we ‘recollect’ what we ‘remember’.⁴¹ In other words, because of our shared life, language is how we represent an inner memory (ie. *erinnern*) sensuously and in reality (ie. *entsinnen*). Thus, if we return briefly to the theories of Kant and Schiller, this would be rather like saying that *Geist*, the interior aspect of an ‘unexpressed, felt effect’,⁴² and *Stoff*, the externalising means by which this effect is supposed to be reproduced, are brought together by the action of memory. Hölderlin’s conception, by contrast, is that, either both *Geist* and *Stoff* exist essentially as activities progressing in time, or that they create time through the manner of their existence. Both these possibilities mean that memory is in some way a representation of time, and unifies spirit and substance whenever we are conscious of them (*ahnen*). Thus, for the poet, the communal soul has two levels of significance, firstly at a metaphysical level, in representing change in general, and secondly as a guarantee of his or her ability to communicate, even if only incompletely, with a public, and for the public in turn to engage with what he or she has written.

David Pacini, the translator of Henrich, uses the word ‘remembrance’ to represent this key concept of Hölderlin’s, and particularly Hölderlin’s word, *Andenken*.⁴³ *Andenken* is a kind of pondering or calling things to mind, and can also be used to refer to a public act of remembrance or commemoration, or to a memento or souvenir. Hölderlin also uses *erinnern*, the usual German word for remembering or reminding; referring, as above, to an internal process, as information is absorbed into inner consciousness. He contrasts and

⁴¹ (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, Introduction, p.XXX.

⁴² (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, Introduction, p.XXVIII.

⁴³ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, Foreword, p.xxxi.

complements this in *Wenn der Dichter einmal...* with 'entsinnen', which involves expression, extracting the thought from the inner senses, and recalling a memory in language. Equally importantly, he uses the word, 'ahnden', or 'ahnen', which means being aware of what has happened, and that there is a future: *antizipiertes Erinnern*.⁴⁴

Most of these words occur somewhere in Hölderlin's writings, and help communicate the force of his philosophy of change.

Before we consider more specifically how the terminology of remembering relates to *Seyn*, just a brief mention of some ways in which this relationship has been characterised might be useful. If we follow Frank, who regards the representative inexhaustibility of art as the only way to represent the unknowability of *Seyn*,⁴⁵ the word 'hovering' seems to take on a new meaning, divorced from its strictly Fichtean use, so that, as we hang between future and past, Being and Not-Being, in a condition of being *harmoniscentgegengesetzt*, we inhabit a sort of half-world, somewhere between this world and the next, somewhere between consciousness and stygian oblivion. The transition takes on a dreamlike quality, while at the same time being in some way superior to anything an ordinary mortal could experience in everyday life. As in *Hyperion*, only people who have been through the hell-on-earth of blind, unbridled and ill-directed striving can finally reconcile themselves calmly to their own life cycle, and thereby achieve a state of mind capable of knowing Being, or the One and All. This

⁴⁴(ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, Introduction, p.XXXII; p.124n.

⁴⁵Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, p.126.

In this he follows Kant's conclusions regarding the aesthetic ideas.

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:314, §49, p.192.

seems to be a long way both from the usual, more conscious, sense of 'remembrance' in English, and from the truism that the present lies between future and past. It is difficult to find any word which might describe this almost meditational condition. Words like 'awareness' suggest a self-conscious state that would be too closely related to the already divided condition of consciousness to meet Hölderlin's requirements, but alternatives, such as 'apprehend' tend to be linked to entities so ineffable as to involve us in arguments about whether they are in fact completely devoid of content.

However, reference to memory can nevertheless explain how Hölderlin thought we can know Being, or the One and All. It involves nothing mysterious. It is something very familiar, except - as Hölderlin pointed out - that we are rarely aware of it. For this purpose we need to think about memory in a rather Fichtean performative sense that might not usually seem to belong to the family of 'memory' concepts. For instance, I remember how to pick up a cup. This is a performative memory, in the sense that it is not until someone has had a stroke or bad accident that we would need to say they have forgotten how to pick up a cup. They themselves might even realise they have forgotten how to do it. This is what tells us that picking up a cup is an act of memory. Examples of this kind are connected with our having learned, or having learned how to do something. And they merge at a certain point into our state of consciousness, or, less consciously, our state of general awareness. Like the physical processes of being hungry and going to sleep, they are part of being alive; and like digestion or gaseous exchange in the bloodstream, they are at work unnoticed in the background of everything we do. Thus, there are processes of mental awareness that can legitimately be grouped together with the phenomena of memory, though not perhaps with specific memories, and are

constantly present, as an integral part of being alive. If we live and experience, we are remembering. When Hölderlin says that we have an *Ahndung* of *Seyn*, he is thus not necessarily referring to anything particularly mysterious or supernatural.

Therefore, the full significance of Hölderlin's description in *Das untergehende Vaterland*, of how every transitory present moment lies at the interface between the determined and the undetermined as it slips past, is that it shows us how Being, though itself pre-logical, pre-conscious and undetermined, is also experienced at every moment. The One and All, as we learn from *Hyperion*, is present in everything, and is everywhere in the world around us. It is, then, our unconscious or pre-conscious memory that holds all this together, and enables us to engage with both nature and the One and All. It is what enables us to recognise beauty and it partly explains why we respond to beauty in such a powerful way. I have chosen here to emphasise Hölderlin's philosophy of human life and of poetic method mainly as a response to the philosophy of Fichte.⁴⁶ However, in relation to the Platonic elements in Hölderlin's thought, we can add, briefly, that our account of memory remains coherent. Our unconscious grasping of the experiences of the fleeting moment as they pass by, and our ability to use skills and instincts that we are unaware of having learned nevertheless have some similarity to the Platonic theory of *anamnesis*, or 'unforgetting' of what we knew ante-natally in the World of Forms. Hölderlin's poetry is known to many readers for its portrayal of vivid memory, homecoming, and the vain search for the lost innocence of childhood. However, many of his apparently nostalgic references to the lost innocence of childhood, or the lost security of the childhood home and family are intended to draw our thoughts towards a sense of memory, or

⁴⁶ Frank, Henrich, Beiser and Pinkard, *op. cit.* also provide more detail about the relationship with Schelling.

remembering that is more deeply situated in the human psyche, ie. the sense of memory that enables us to know Being.

Throughout this section Hölderlin's metaphysical position emerges as being relatively level-headed and commonsensical, mainly because a fairly close reading of his words justifies this. He was a writer for whom it was important to establish a theoretical groundwork, however he might subsequently use this groundwork when making practical artistic decisions about his preferred figurative means of expression. It has therefore been worth rescuing this important area of non-cognitive knowledge, ie. the ability to 'know' Being, from accusations of *Schwärmerei*.⁴⁷ Like other of Hölderlin's ideas, it has a multiple line of descent. First, his unquestioning acceptance that aesthetics must be set in a context of epistemology and moral philosophy was taken from the Kantian tradition, as also his use of the term, 'communal soul'. Then, more specifically, he has modified a version of Fichte's theory that the internal striving and activity of the *Ich* drives us on through life, and also combined this with Plato's theory that we long to return to the unremembered World of Forms. All these facets of his thought are accommodated within the idea of the all-embracing whole, and it is memory that enables us to have a sometimes hazy, but at other times 'beautiful, holy, divine feeling'⁴⁸ for the nature and magnitude of this whole.

⁴⁷ Kneller, Jane E., 'Romantic Conceptions of the Self in Hölderlin and Novalis', in (ed.) David E. Klemm and Günter Zöllner, *Figuring the Self*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, p.144.

⁴⁸J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...' in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.56.

CHAPTER 8

SPINOZA, FICHTE, FATE AND FREEDOM

We now return to Hölderlin's rejection of Kant's claim that our expectation of purpose in nature is simply a presumption.¹ This is the next element of Hölderlin's thought that we shall try to integrate into his overall aesthetic view. Hölderlin's claims for the existence of an all-embracing whole relied largely on his adoption of a version of the Spinozan philosophy. Doing so, however, conflicted with Kant's discussion of the properties of the beautiful object, the work of art and the purposiveness of nature in terms of an 'as if', whereby the human mind projects its judgement onto these artefacts. The mind has to use a model that makes its thought processes possible, and uses its presumption of purposiveness in nature as a regulative principle for ordering its understanding of external nature.² Schiller pushed back the boundary of this 'as if', by suggesting that the internal constitution of the perceived object's form and content combine to elicit an aesthetic response. However, as Beiser says, he retained his own 'as if', which Hölderlin, like the Romantics, tried to eliminate. Beauty was only the phenomenal appearance of freedom, though it helped us understand freedom.³ In this, beauty was somewhat analogous to the Kantian aesthetic idea, in that it could aid our insight into the abstract, though it remained in the phenomenal world. The Romantics, says Beiser, wanted to show a direct link between the so-called phenomenal and noumenal realms that made the noumenal accessible in some way relevant to everyday reality. They thought they had identified the aesthetic as that link, thereby

¹ See chapter 6 above.

² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:578, §67, p.250.

³ Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun, 1999, p.18, 08.02.1793.

establishing an accessibility that destroyed the problem of the phenomenal / noumenal dichotomy. In their terms, the ‘as if’ would become redundant.⁴

However, one reason Kant refused to allow our presumption of purposiveness in nature more than regulative status was that human free will would be impossible, if mankind were genuinely part of a teleological, and thus predetermined, system.⁵ H.S. Harris describes Hölderlin’s belief in autonomy and individuality while a student at Tübingen.⁶ Given Hölderlin’s sympathy with the Spinozan philosophy, and the way the theme of Fate recurs in his poems and in *Hyperion*, the problem therefore arises: does Hölderlin succeed in reconciling Kantian / Fichtean conceptions of autonomy and freedom of the will with his Spinozism?⁷ Hölderlin’s answer would be, ‘Yes,’ and I think he would be justified in this.

Spinoza’s rationalist realism based all existence and reality, including that of the living natural world and human beings, on substance.⁸ He identified substance with God, or, as Lessing said, the One and All. The universe embodies a necessary, rational order that is knowable by the human mind, and the true good for humans consists in knowledge of this order. Every occurrence in nature can be explained in terms of an infinite causal chain, so nothing is contingent. The order and connection of ideas is just the same as all other connections among things. Thinking and extended substance are the same substance, but with different attributes; so that creatures other

⁴ Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, pp.393, 394. In this instance he appears to be including Hölderlin among the Romantics.

⁵ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.170.

⁶ H.S. Harris, *Hegel’s Development: Towards the Sunlight*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p.100.

⁷ Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.275.

⁸ This summary of Spinoza is mainly based on:

Henry E. Allison, ‘Spinoza’, in (ed.) Edward Craig, *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Vol. 9, Sociology of knowledge - Zoroastrianism*, London; New York: Routledge, 1998, pp.96 - 107.

than humans are ‘all animate, though to differing degrees’.⁹ Mind is thus not a separate substance, but the extent to which things can be said to have a mind is a function of physical complexity, so that there are degrees of being ‘alive’, or of being composed of substance in its active mode. Spinoza’s references to: ‘The force through which things persevere in their being’ also show that, in the most minimal and weak sense, everything is alive, even so-called inanimate objects. They lie right at the lowest point of his universal scale. Conversely, we are as much subject to universal forces of nature as they are, even though, at our end of the scale of powers, we possess conscious awareness and rational insight. The love of God is closely bound up with rational knowledge, because it enables rational thought and the control of the passions. Through rational thought we can find out about the world around us. Since God is substance and is everywhere and in everything, adequate knowledge of anything involves the love of God as its effective dimension. Thus, a self-reinforcing cycle of increased knowledge, increased love of God and pursuit of the good for mankind is set up. Although it had an element of ‘speculative bio-physics’, Spinoza saw his philosophy as a preferable alternative to Descartes’ mechanistic model. Nevertheless, in the context of Hölderlin, the problem could be that, as well as leaving inanimate nature with some vestiges of life, Spinoza also leaves mankind equally strictly subject to a logical chain of natural physical and chemical causes.

In Hölderlin more than one strand of this brief survey of Spinoza comes through. However, Spinoza was not the sole influence on Hölderlin’s views on unity with nature and the significance of fate. Religious pietism may also have played a part.¹⁰ Despite being controversial, pietism was influential in theological circles at

⁹ Henry E. Allison, ‘Spinoza’, in (ed.) Edward Craig, *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Vol. 9, Sociology of knowledge - Zoroastrianism*, London; New York: Routledge, 1998, p.98.

¹⁰ Beiser acknowledges that aspects of deterministic Protestant theology are compatible with Spinozism. See: Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard

Tübingen and had been a thread in the Swabian reformed church since Luther's and Brenz's time.¹¹ Theologically, quietism was questioned, because it encouraged more pantheistic interpretations of the omnipresence of God, and tended to present God in such abstract, spiritual terms, that the essentially personal characteristics of the Christian God were underplayed. Its moral overtones were that to seek the highest good means to seek as close as possible a reconciliation and union with God and his will. This in turn placed an emphasis on the extent to which the will of God determines our life, though without committing the believer to accepting the logical necessity of worldly processes. Thus, exposure in the *Tübinger Stift* to the quietist

University Press, 2003, p.171. However, orthodox eighteenth century Protestant theologians seem to have detected the influence of both. They seem to have been concerned to avoid both Spinozism and determinism, less concerned about the influence of Plato. At p.63 Beiser questions whether there are any links between the Platonic aspects of 'Romantic mysticism' and the Protestant tradition.

¹¹ Pietism is a school of quietist religious thought, which, while usually thought of, harmlessly enough, as advocating contemplation and the development of a deeply individual and direct relationship with God, made its adherents politically suspect, because their relationship with God risked elevating them, in their own eyes, above worldly law and political relationships. Thus, it sometimes had revolutionary connotations, though, despite government doubts, this does not seem to have been the case among the clergy of eighteenth century Württemberg.

There is a literature that discusses the extent to which Hölderlin was influenced by pietism, particularly in the light of the reappearance of motifs in the post-1799 poems and hymns that may well be Christian, though Hölderlin has purposely entwined them with classical allusions, especially with imagery associated with Dionysus. See: Jean-François Courtine, 'Hölderlin's Christ', in (ed.) Aris Fioretos, *The solid letter: readings of Friedrich Hölderlin*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999, p.129.

The question is interesting, but complicated, for instance by the example Priscilla Hayden-Roy uses, of a Catholic priest from Mainz, who used the language of 'liberty and equality' and references to the 'freedom tree' of the cross to illustrate his sermon extolling Christianity against republicanism. Use of an 'ideology's' ideas and vocabulary does not guarantee the speaker's agreement with its arguments.

The focus often seems to be on the political dimensions of quietism. However, its more deterministic elements, and, particularly, its emphasis on reconciliation with an ineffable God through love seem to be sharply relevant in this context, though I do not propose to pursue them fully here.

See Priscilla A. Hayden-Roy, 'New and Old Histories: The case of Hölderlin and Württemberg pietism', in *Modern Languages and Literatures, Department of German Language and Literature Papers*, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 1992, pp.369-379. available at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/modlanggerman/23> [accessed 21.05.08]

P.H. Gaskill, 'Hölderlin and revolution', in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, vol XII, 1976, pp.118-136.

H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p.

Even today, quietism has a place in the Württemberger Reform Church.

traditions of branches of the Württemberger Reformed Church possibly predisposed Hölderlin to accept Spinozan determinism.

It is not so important here to decide how far Hölderlin was or was not, strictly speaking, a Spinozan. Most prominent in his work is the idea that coming to understand the reality of the cosmos fully through love will lead to a good life. If we re-capitulate the way in which Hölderlin envisaged this coming about, we shall see, firstly, how he took an idea that we also find in Fichte, and applied it to this Spinozan end; secondly, how an image of humanity driven by fate emerged from this; and thirdly, how the aimed for love and reconciliation comes about only through the exercise of autonomy. We have already observed that Fichte saw the *Ich* as being composed of a centrifugal and a centripetal drive. The centripetal drive refers inwards, into the structure of the ego, whereas the centrifugal drive creates for itself, or discovers, an external world, in the form of resistance. Metaphorically speaking, this is a dark and claustrophobic image of reality, as a desperate *Ich* struggles to escape from within itself, and blunders blindly against all kinds of natural resistance, until it has formed some conception of an external world and how it works. In Fichte, this is the action of the free, autonomous self.

Hölderlin upturns the significance of Fichte's imagery. He recognises the presence within the self of Fichte's drives, not so much as self-relating functions within the self, but as functions of the self in relation to the One and All in nature. For Hölderlin the One and All is present in and originates everything. The implication of this for his assessment of Fichte is that it is a mistake to confront nature, when we should be embracing it. However, Hölderlin could see some plausibility in what Fichte was claiming. There is a sense in which nature thwarts us, and, however rationally we try to conduct our lives, apparent acts of God, coincidences, bad habits,

oversights and bad luck divert us into unexpected and unwished for directions. We sometimes feel as if we waste our time choosing and planning, because we are no better than inanimate objects, formed and tossed around in the world in accordance with ineluctable natural laws. It is as if we have still not quite worked out what is going on out there. This is fate. Thus, inanimate objects are subject to fate and, if we behave or experience like inanimate objects, we, too, are ruled by fate. By this point, we seem to have reinterpreted Fichte's view of the centrifugal drive completely. It is an alternative way of describing fate.

Thus, according to Hölderlin, interpreting the drives in relation to Being, there is in us a powerful drive whose impetus is simply to strive on blindly. It has a close affinity with rationality, because it can manifest itself as a desire for independence and freedom. It is a drive that develops with self-consciousness. This then brings us to the way Hölderlin typifies mankind's life cycle. The life cycle Hölderlin describes seems to owe something to a paragraph of Schiller's *Naïve and Sentimental*, in which he uses an extended metaphor to distinguish the natural / naïve from the sentimental;¹² Hölderlin uses this passage as part of his wider philosophy of art and human nature. The following phrases, taken from the opening pages of *Hyperion*, indicate our starting point at birth: '*Ruhe der Kindheit! himmlische Ruhe!*', '*... ich noch ein stilles*

¹² Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005, p.23.

Wir sehen alsdann in der unvernünftigen Natur nur eine glücklichere Schwester, die in den mütterlichen Hause zurückblieb, aus welchem wir im Übermut unserer Freyheit heraus in die Fremde stürmten. Mit schmerzlichen Verlangen sehnen wir uns dahin zurück, sobald wir angefangen, die Drangsale der Kultur zu erfahren und hören im fernen Ausland der Kunst der Mutter rührende Stimme. Solange wir bloße Naturkinder waren, waren wir glücklich und vollkommen; wir sind frei geworden, und haben beydes verloren. Daraus entspringt eine doppelte und sehr ungleiche Sehnsucht nach der Natur...

Thereupon we view non-rational Nature only as we would a more fortunate sister, who stayed behind in the maternal home from which we arrogantly stormed out in the exercise of our freedom. With painful longing we yearn to be back there, as soon as we experience the afflictions of culture and hear the heartwarming voice of our mother in the distant foreign land of art. As long as we were children of nature, we were happy and complete; we became free and lost both our happiness and our completeness. From this arose a double and very unequal yearning for Nature...

Kind war, und vor dem allem, was uns umgibt, nichts wußte, ‘... ein göttlich Wesen ist das Kind’, ‘... Der Zwang des Gesetzes und des Schicksals betastet es nicht; im Kind’ ist Freiheit allein; ... In ihm ist Frieden.’¹³ As children we are free of the compulsion of the law and of fate, and are thus free, but we also know nothing about what is going on around us. Because of their innocent closeness to nature, children are divine beings, close to God. However, they also lack self-sufficiency.¹⁴ With age comes the ability to reason and decide for oneself, and as Hyperion laments:

Ach! wär ich nie in eure Schulen gegangen... Ich bin bei euch so recht vernünftig geworden, habe gründlich mich zu unterscheiden gelernt von dem, was mich umgibt, bin nun so vereinzelt in der schönen Welt...¹⁵

He became aware of himself as an independent person, went to study, became rational – and, we may infer - superficially wise. But in doing so, he lost that innocent ignorance that kept him close to God. By inference too, he became subject to the laws of reason. The next step brings us to Hölderlin’s view of Fichte’s theory of resistance. The rational man confronts and tries to dominate nature, whether by controlling it materially, or by demanding that it should conform to his own way of thinking. He is autonomous in the incomplete and wilful sense that he thinks he knows what is best

¹³ Phrases taken from: Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.485.

The restful condition of childhood! heavenly rest! ... I was still a silent child, and knew nothing of everything that surrounds us... a child is a divine being ... The compulsion of the law and fate does not touch him; freedom is found only in the child; peace is in him.

¹⁴ But see J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, ‘Wenn der Dichter einmal...’, in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.55.

On that page, Hölderlin reverts to a more Kantian view of freedom, pointing out that the childish, ignorant naïvety, that unthinkingly accepts our everyday life, precludes the exercise of freedom. We have to reflect on our condition in order to become free. As this chapter proceeds, it may be possible to see that Hölderlin’s view of the human condition is that we are dealing throughout with truths and illusions, misconceptions and realisations, so that there is almost always one identifiable sense in which something is so, but another in which it is not strictly so.

¹⁵ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.485.

Oh, if only I had never attended your schools! I have become so thoroughly rational with you, have learned to distinguish myself fundamentally from what is around me, and now I am so isolated in the beautiful world.

and is determined to have his own way. Hölderlin agrees with Fichte, that this outward directed activity dominates a large part of most people's adult life, though his interpretation is more literal and practical than Fichte's. People continually devise personal projects that collapse and have to be re-thought, usually on even more ambitious lines, intended to defeat the recurrent interventions of nature or fate.

From his account of the self Fichte drew his view that human life is a constant struggle of reason against nature; education means cultivating our rational skills solely in order to subordinate nature and bring experience into conformity with reason.¹⁶ However, Hölderlin interpreted this life history differently.¹⁷ Some people spend a lifetime struggling against nature, and simply never give up; which is what their centrifugal drive commands. Others eventually realise that humankind is impotent against the enormous power of nature. They give up, overwhelmed once they realise what a futile task they have attempted, and horrified by the merciless inhumanity of the unstoppable forces of fate. However, they cannot prevent their drives from striving. They become spiritually dead, hopeless people, who either abandon control over their lives and submit to living like inanimate objects, while raging against what they think is happening to them; or they become hard, inhuman, grasping people, with no ultimate goal or meaning to their life other than activity.¹⁸

Interacting with this drive that takes us through life, however, Hölderlin's equivalent of the centripetal drive is striving to unite us with nature, or Being. During

¹⁶ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 'Lectures concerning the scholar's vocation, 1794', in (ed.) (tr.) Daniel Breazeale, *Early Philosophical Writings*, Ithaca NY; London, Cornell University Press, 1993, p.164.

¹⁷ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, (ed.) (tr.) David S. Pacini, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.230, believes Hölderlin relied on Fichte's philosophy, attracted to it because it could readily be applied in areas that Fichte had not specifically explored. This does not seem to be the case here.

¹⁸ An example of this would be the fraternity with which Alabanda had previously become associated, in *Hyperion*.

See Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.109.

the immature period, such as that in which Hyperion was living at the time from which we have taken our quotations, we would experience the workings of this drive as a feeling of nostalgia and regret. We would see the pre-conscious period of our childhood and youth as a golden age of personal completeness, and we would long for the restoration, either of this naïve time or of some other happy period or place in our life, when we had felt contented and fulfilled. The life of *Der Wanderer* (1800),¹⁹ for example, centres on his attempts to return to childhood haunts. Hölderlin's whole myth of the human life story is like an attack on subjectivist idealism. The only options subjective idealism opens for us are the vain personal battle against nature or an obsession with either the happy or the disastrous times in our own lives. It is a blinkered, self-absorbed worldview in practical, as well as in metaphysical terms.

Now we need to bring together the implications of this for the notions of fate and autonomy. Freedom in Kant was rational obedience to the moral law. Freedom in Fichte and in the later Schiller was the state of being either undetermined or self-determined. Although we have said that Spinoza had a determinist view, he also had a definition of freedom. He believed freedom did not mean being undetermined – for after all, everything was already determined by God – but it did mean being self-determined.²⁰ If we think again of his scale of life, even God acts from the necessity of his own nature, so he is entirely self-determined, the freest entity there can be. Inanimate objects are the least free. We, however, in accordance with our nature, and somewhere between God and objects, are subject partly to necessary natural forces, and partly to our own self-determinations. If Hölderlin is to claim, then, that humans enjoy freedom, even though they are ultimately one with Being and all of nature, he

¹⁹ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.272.

²⁰ Henry E. Allison, 'Spinoza', in (ed.) Edward Craig, *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Vol. 9, Sociology of knowledge - Zoroastrianism*, London; New York: Routledge, 1998, p.99.

has some support from Spinoza. In fact, Hölderlin believed we break out of a life controlled by fate, and at another level, break away from the pernicious implications of subjectivism, by exercising whatever ability for self-determination we have. We make a choice, and it is a choice that can be based only on experience and knowledge. After possibly years of moving onwards erratically, making unproductive digressions into the realms of material ambition and sentimental nostalgia, which Hölderlin famously calls our ‘eccentric path’,²¹ we understand enough about the natural world to realise that Being is in us and all around us; that we and nature have the same source; that our life is a natural phenomenon in the same way as everyone else’s life and everything in the cosmos; and that it all constitutes a unity from which we not only cannot escape, but from which we have no reason to wish to escape.

Arriving at this position in life, which is the end of our myth of what a lifetime involves, is not fate in the sense of being inevitable. Many people never reach this point; and this, having perceived it as a truth, was Hölderlin’s great concern. It is a freely chosen position, that satisfies the strivings of both drives. It is a position of maturity, in which we knowingly embrace the One and All that we were only unconsciously part of in our childhood. It is autonomous, because it is a freely chosen acceptance of reality, and of our own limitations. Also, rather paradoxically, and contrary to the beliefs of those who think Hölderlin’s Spinozism commits him to the

²¹Friedrich Hölderlin, ‘Preface to a draft fragment of “Hyperion”’, in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, Hyperion*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. 1997, p.83.

J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, ‘Hermocrates an Cephalus’, in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.9.

see also: (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.216:

The eccentric path is not an original metaphor of Hölderlin’s own invention. It is based on a section from Plato’s *Timaios*. There Plato claims that God gave us the ability to recognise the rationality in the movement of the heavens, and use this as the pattern according to which we could re-order our own lawless thoughts, bringing them into agreement with the undeviating order of nature.

surrender of either autonomy or freedom, it is a condition in which we have taken responsibility for ourselves and our own actions. We no longer blame fate for our life's path. We are no longer objects controlled by blind forces. Our eyes are open to the way in which we and the world form a natural, beautiful unity, and we can now run our life in the awareness of this wider, though necessarily incomplete, understanding of harmony.

In *Wenn der Dichter einmal...* Hölderlin shows that the free choice we have described above as our way of evading fate is relevant in poetry too. Although all the harmoniously opposed and united elements he discusses can become recognisable, or knowable (*erkennbar*) in pure poetic individuality,²² the conscious self achieves free individuality, unity and identity only by freely chosen reference to something external to the *Ich*. Otherwise, the internal aspects of the *Ich*, the *subjektive Natur*,²³ whether real or ideal, will either relate only inwards, towards each other as a harmony so complete that the self annuls itself into unconsciousness,²⁴ or, alternatively, man's subjective nature will be compulsively driven into conflict with something outside itself, as we have seen happens when we are ruled by fate.

From the dark interiority of Fichte, Hölderlin seems to have taken us out into a beautiful, sunny world of harmony. However, this would be a misleading way of summing up his philosophy. Reconciliation with nature is not an escape from the unpleasant side of life. Hölderlin's reconciled man shares some characteristics with Schiller's sublime man. He cannot physically overpower the terrifying aspects of life or nature, but he has the mental strength to transcend and embrace them willingly for

²²J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, fn. p52.

²³J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.50.

²⁴J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.52.

what they are. His sublimity is his demonstration that he is more than a mere physical object, and thus also demonstrates his superiority.²⁵ With Schiller, too, Hölderlin has acknowledged the superiority of the conscious, or Sentimental.²⁶ Even though Being was introduced to us in *Seyn, Urtheil...* as pre-conscious, and thus, unconscious, this is not the criterion for judging a human being. Our self-consciousness is our unique strength, and the unity with Being that we knowingly and freely choose exceeds the, in any case irrecoverable, lost unity of childhood innocence. Rather like Schiller in the *Aesthetic Letters*, Hölderlin believed he had to use art, and especially poetry, as a way of educating mankind. Just as Spinoza believed knowledge took us to God, so Hölderlin believed that any way of communicating the presence of beauty in nature, and thus of showing us the One and All, was a way of guiding us to that point of understanding at which we would be capable of apprehending the beautiful unity of which we are part. This then provided poetry with its purpose, and with the two levels on which Hölderlin employed it. He used poetry both to tell us about the One and All in his choice of content, and to demonstrate the One and All to us through the beauty of his literary work.

If we take this message, we shall choose to free ourselves of the pressures of fate, and, in *ein[em] Zustand der höchste[n] Bildung*,²⁷ no longer hoping for the

²⁵ Friedrich Schiller, 'Über das Erhabene', in *Schillers Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4, Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1879, pp.726-738. Available at: <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/?id=12&xid=2405&kapitel=1&cHash=f02826dfcf2> [accessed 17.06.08]

²⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005, pp.33-35.

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature*, (ed.) trans. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.39-40.

²⁷ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Hermocrates an Cephalus', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.9:

a condition of the highest cultural development

happy, but blind coincidence that Hölderlin discussed in *Es giebt ein Naturstand...*,²⁸ we shall determine our own way through life.²⁹ Despite the evident differences between the poles between which Hölderlin's human race oscillates and Schiller's sense / form drive dichotomy, this condition of the highest culture has something in common with Schiller's condition of being able to exercise the play drive. It places us in a condition of *Ruhe*, meaning peace, or rest, that is stable and no longer stressful. Though it contains conflicting elements, they are also resolved, or *harmoniscentgegengesetzt*.³⁰ The individual can live without conflict or struggle, but more freely, effectively and humanly than he or she could otherwise have done.

Hölderlin's account of life, fate and nature seems to have satisfied three demands. Firstly, he can still claim that humans have free, rational autonomy, as the Enlightenment tradition had always done. Secondly, he demonstrated the limits of human freedom and rationality. He shared this aim with Kant and also, although this is probably only implicit in his work, with many writers in the Christian tradition. Thirdly, however, he also showed how very much tighter these limits are than we like to think. Nevertheless, within the area defined by these three perspectives, his writing is a celebration of human freedom. Human freedom is hard won and largely unappreciated, because humanity is usually seeking it in the wrong places, as we move restlessly through life.

²⁸ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Es giebt ein Naturstand', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.3.

²⁹ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.55.

In this condition, we at once accept, but are not dependent on an external world. We can reflect on our own existence.

³⁰ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.43.

Love

Earlier in this chapter, we identified the love of God as mankind's motivation to find out more about the world, and to become reconciled with the One and All. Frank believes that Hölderlin gives this conception of love a further philosophical rôle, in that it also unifies the elements of the bi-fold notion of the Absolute³¹ with which he replaced his original monistic, unknowable idea of Being³² during the late 1790s. Beiser also identifies this shift, using Hölderlin's reference to Heraclitus and the *en diapheron heauto* (*εν διαφερων εαυτώ*) to emphasise the diversity within the supposed One.³³ Then Frank takes the 'semantic inexhaustibility'³⁴ of art to be the way Hölderlin tells us we can gain hints about this articulated Absolute.³⁵ However, this seems to be a mistake on Frank's part. The drives he thinks Hölderlin has located in this later version of *Seyn* are not internal structures of the Absolute, but the constituents of human consciousness that impel the human subject onwards through life, as our discussion of Fate has shown. It would indeed seem strange if Hölderlin's later version of the Absolute had a structure *per se*, not so strange to say, as Hölderlin in fact does, that we know of the Absolute through our relationship with the structures

³¹ Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York, 2004, p.116. Frank mentions the 'antagonistic tendencies within the unconditioned, or love... an exciting thought... with which Holderlin takes his leave of the Jacobian idea [of] the unconditioned.'

³² See chapter 6 above. The reasonableness of Frank's claim rests on *Seyn, Urtheil...* and, for example, on an extract from Hölderlin's letter to Hegel, that Being is unknowable:

Letter of 26.01.1795, quoted and translated in Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York, 2004, p.114.

But see also: 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, fn. p52. referred to in this section.

³³ Beiser, Frederick C., *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism 1781 - 1801*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, p.398.

³⁴ Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York, 2004, p.126.

³⁵ Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York, 2004, p.122.

of nature. However, although Frank is wrong to describe the unity created by love in quite this way, he is right that, in a sense, love ‘holds everything together’. We can give a similar reply to Beiser, and will later do so.³⁶

We would normally think of love as bringing individual people together, and Hölderlin writes about this kind of love between human beings. The first and most obvious instances are in the odes and hymns of the early 1790s. The friendship and sense of brotherhood among his student friends at Tübingen are celebrated, reflecting not merely personal relationships, but also a serious political dimension, in that brotherhood is the foundation of political freedom.³⁷ Other poems and the drafts for *Hyperion* also confirm that human love can be an autonomous and equal relationship between two individuals, in which, however, the two also transcend the boundaries of personal selfhood and in some sense enter each other’s selfhood:³⁸

... Götterlust der Geist genießt,
Süßer, heiliger und freier
Seel’ in Seele sich ergießt,³⁹

Ein Gott muß in mir seyn, denn ich fühl’ auch unsere Trennung kaum. Wie die seeligen Schatten am Lethe, lebt jetzt meine Seele mit deiner, in himmlischer Freiheit und das Schicksal waltet über unsere Liebe nicht mehr.⁴⁰

³⁶ See chapter 9 below.

³⁷ See, for example, ‘Kanton Schweiz’ (1791), ‘Hymne an die Freundschaft’ (1792), in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main / Leipzig, 1999, p.121 & pp.138 -141.

³⁸ Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York, 2004, p.122.

Hammermeister, Kai, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.55.

Hammermeister identifies this conception of love as an important aspect of Schiller’s worldview. He refers to Hegel’s claim that the Idealists and Romantics took their conception of love from Schiller, and also to Schiller’s early views on the subject (1786). Unfortunately, I have not been able to identify it in Schiller’s aesthetic works, only in Hölderlin. Helpfully, however, Hammermeister tells us that Plotinus may have been their common source.

³⁹ ‘Hymne an die Freundschaft’ (1792), in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main / Leipzig, 1999, p.141:

... the mind enjoys the pleasure of the gods,
Sweeter, holier and freer
Soul pours itself into soul,

The search for interpersonal unity of this kind is compelling and irresistible. It is what we desire of all our human relationships. Hyperion comes tantalisingly close to achieving it with his male friend, Alabanda.

Ich kann den Unterschied nicht leiden, der zwischen uns ist.⁴¹

In love, the self / other distinction disappears, a conception alien to Kant or Fichte.

We can introduce the second way in which love has significance in Hölderlin's thought, by referring again to Hölderlin's account of the passage of time, unified by memory.⁴² In *Das untergehende Vaterland*, he showed how a continuous temporal path is plotted by points of continuously interacting resolution and readjustment. Another related embedded cyclical process is that of change, decay and regeneration. Not only is it normal for great civilisations to wane and decay, and for human culture to re-emerge, rejuvenated, perhaps elsewhere at another time, it is also part of a natural and inevitable cycle.⁴³ Progress through life is erratic, not linear, along the metaphorical eccentric path through life that rests ultimately on this analysis of the passage of time, and its relationship to Being.⁴⁴ Human life also has a natural cycle; we search, often misguidedly, along our eccentric path, for an ideal past or future, but always coloured by our own reality.⁴⁵ Moments of insight and joy alternate

⁴⁰ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufe und späte Fragmente: Entwürfe zur endgültigen Fassung', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, pp. 190. This quotation is addressed to Hyperion's female love, Diotima.

A god must be in me, for I hardly feel our separation, either. Like the blessed shades by the Lethe, my soul is now living with yours in heavenly freedom, and fate no longer has any power over our love.

⁴¹ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufe und späte Fragmente: Entwürfe zur endgültigen Fassung', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.191.

⁴² See chapter 7 above.

⁴³ This is a recurrent theme illustrated in the final, published version of *Hyperion*.

⁴⁴ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufe und späte Fragmente: Fragment von *Hyperion*', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.83.

⁴⁵J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Der Gesichtspunct aus dem wir das Altertum anzusehen haben', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.23.

with periods of routine and, often, despair, as our drive towards progress and change alternates with our drive to limitation, interacting with the workings of the natural world around us. The cycle of the seasons, the natural organic cycle of life and death, and the erosion and decay of inanimate nature are not independent cycles but are only further examples of the same process.⁴⁶ If we accept that cycles on this pattern are ubiquitous, we can perhaps, with Hölderlin, accept also that notions of degeneracy, decay and decline would, if we understood them fully, lose their horror. We would accept that this is what constitutes change of any kind, and would thus become aware of the wholeness of everything in and around us; we would become reconciled with our place in the cosmos, thereby demonstrating our moral strength. Decline, if looked at in this way, indeed becomes nothing more than a transition.⁴⁷

Then, integrating this view with Spinoza's identification of rationality with the love of God, the Christian desire to be one with God's will, and with Plato's conception of *eros*,⁴⁸ Hölderlin claims that all the various opposing forces that we see at work in ourselves and in these natural cycles are permanently reconcilable, not by any one single force overpowering any other, but through love.⁴⁹ Hölderlin specifically tells us this is one of the functions of love:

Den Widerstreit der Triebe, deren keiner

⁴⁶ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufe und späte Fragmente: metrische Fassung', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.114.

⁴⁷ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.33. 'der Übergang'

⁴⁸ Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, pp.382, 383 & 403.

Eros in the *Phaidos* was the love that made us long for the World of Forms where we originated, and in the *Symposium* was what made us strive for the Good.

⁴⁹ Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York, 2004, p.126.

Entbehrlich ist, vereiniget die Liebe⁵⁰

Love simultaneously permits both wholeness and change. Our attempts to understand what Hölderlin meant by resolution through love are complicated by the fact that, as English speakers, we have to decide how to translate the word *Auflösung* while Hölderlin's argument is in process. It may mean 'annihilation', it may mean 'cancelling out', it may mean 'dissolving', it may mean 'resolution'. Even for German readers, Hölderlin needs to clarify the full implications of this kind of resolution.

... so daß die Auflösung des Idealindividuellen nicht als Schwächung und Tod, sondern als Aufleben als Wachstum, die Auflösung des Unendlichneuen nicht als vernichtende Gewalt, sondern als Liebe und beedes zusammen als ein (transcendentaler) schöpferischer Act erscheint, dessen Wesen es ist, idealindividuelles und realunendliches zu vereinen...⁵¹

Love is like the rediscovery of a lost union; the opposites embrace each other, and the differences between them are absorbed into the resulting unity. It is thus a way of gaining some insight into the ultimate and absolute condition of oneness, and also helps justify the interconnection of the epistemology of Being and Hölderlin's aesthetics.

Frank thought all this demanded some further reconciliation with Hölderlin's account of identity, which he goes on to provide;⁵² actually, the claim demonstrates the place Hölderlin thinks love occupies. For anyone with a pantheistic conception of reality, it is the inner ambiguity of '*das Eine in sich selber unterschiedene*', naturally

⁵⁰ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufe und späte Fragmente: Metrische Fassung', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.114.

Love unifies the conflict of drives, none of which we can do without.

⁵¹ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Der Untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p. 37. The orthography is Hölderlin's own.

... so that the resolution of all that is ideal-individual does not appear as weakness and death, but as enlivenment and growth; the resolution of the infinitely new not as annihilating violence, but as love; and both together as a (transcendental) creative act, whose essence is to unite what is ideal-individual with what is infinitely real...

⁵² Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.123.

shared by everything that exists. In love, we genuinely feel simultaneously *Eins* and *Alles*. Hölderlin believed love enabled us to feel the presence of the whole more deeply, even if mistakes or faults seem to have disturbed its harmony for an instant. Therefore, all knowledge must begin with the study of the beautiful, because anyone who has come to understand life, without grieving, has already achieved a great deal. Any forced understanding, untempered by love or joy, gives us a skewed interpretation of life.⁵³

This conception of love thus united not only human beings, but also the apparently opposed categories of Determined and Absolute (in Fichtean terminology), which is to say, either existent objects or consciousness on one hand, and Being on the other.⁵⁴

In this passage Frank confirms that it is possible to resolve the tension he believed he had observed between Hölderlin's claims regarding the unity of Being, and the presence of drives within the self that need to be united.⁵⁵ However, as we have already noted, Being remains One, whatever the world, minds, objects or people happen to be like. Because Hölderlin does not presume we have complete self-knowledge, and because the subjective is not primary, the order in which human beings discover things may not be the order in which they finally realise they must explain them. Thus, it is quite reasonable to say that love enables us to understand that there is an underlying unity, while also feeling as if it is bringing conflicting forces together. The forces lose their confrontational character once we see that we have been misinterpreting the situation.

⁵³ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Aphorismen', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.19.

see also: Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufe und späte Fragmente: vorletzte Fassung von *Hyperion*', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.157.

⁵⁴ Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.122.

⁵⁵ Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.123.

The Spinozan elements in Hölderlin's thought made it possible for Hölderlin to extend the operation of love into the non-human and inanimate worlds in this way. Because humans and inanimate objects occupy points on a scale of life, it follows that there is a sense in which so-called natural objects too, can love. In the *Hymne an die Schönheit* (1791), for example, the love that exists among artefacts of nature has a hallowing effect on the human observer.⁵⁶ Love of this kind among inanimate objects is a notion that persists even in the concluding comments of the final published version of *Hyperion*:

Lebendige Töne sind wir, stimmen zusammen in deinem Wohllaut, Natur! wer reißt den? wer mag die Liebenden scheiden? -

O Seele! Seele! Schönheit der Welt! du unzerstörbare!...

Wie der Zwist der Liebenden, sind die Dissonanzen der Welt. Versöhnung ist mitten im Streit und alles Getrennte findet sich wieder.

Es scheiden und kehren im Herzen die Adern und einiges, ewiges, glühendes Leben ist Alles.⁵⁷

This quotation shows that, as *Hyperion* gradually accepted the loss of Diotima, he realised it was impossible for him to have lost her, because he, she and all nature, whether living or dead, are indissolubly united, regardless of whether things might superficially appear to contradict this.⁵⁸ For Hölderlin, the human who recognises the

⁵⁶ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main / Leipzig, 1999, p.132.

⁵⁷ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main / Leipzig, 1999, p.640:

We are living notes that sound together in your euphony, oh nature! Who can rip that apart? Who might separate those who love one another? -

Oh, soul, soul! Beauty of the world! You who are indestructible!...

The dissonances of this world are like lovers' tiffs, reconciliation is there in the midst of conflict, and everything that was parted is reunited.

In the heart, the veins separate and return and a single, eternal, burning life is everything.

⁵⁸ Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004, p.122.

Frank explains how Schelling's philosophy also took up this idea, and developed it into an explicit theory of science. There seems to have been mutual influence between Schelling and Hölderlin.

cohesive power of love has already taken a considerable step away from a life driven by blind, meaningless fate, and is beginning to apprehend the omnipresence of Being.

Love is ubiquitous, and is also the source of the harmony and unity in poetic works. We infer from this that poetic art is not a rather aimless free play of the faculties, as Kant might have envisaged, but an integral part of the workings of the cosmos. And it is unlike the strongly tensioned images of equilibrium between competing and equally strong drives favoured by Schiller. Although Hölderlin himself is not usually classified among the Romantics, we see how the themes of love and death, and the sense of a union between mankind and nature, that were taken up by the Romantics, have metaphysical significance in some of his own poems too, for instance, *Der Mensch* (1798).⁵⁹ This poem describes man's origin in nature, his closeness to natural forces and his gradual attempts to assert his own distinctness. Hyperion, in a dark moment, muses that we are all drawn onwards to death, even in our most worldly strivings. It is where we find rest, where we belong, our home.⁶⁰ But love can reconcile mankind to his place in the natural cycle, and love is what reconciles Hölderlin's undeniable belief in nothingness with his claim that we feel joy when we apprehend what lies beyond our false, confrontational view of life. Being is always evident in our organic relationship with non-human nature. It is this that saves us from both horror and nothingness.⁶¹ Thus, these three strands, the pre-conscious condition of unity, which Hölderlin pointed to in *Seyn, Urtheil...*, and which is always present as the One and All, human autonomy, and a conception of love that combines

⁵⁹ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main / Leipzig, 1999, p.204.

⁶⁰ 'Hyperions Schicksalslied', in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig, Insel Verlag, 2001, Bk.II: 2, p.623.

⁶¹ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.36.

Christian, Spinozan and Platonic elements contribute to our perception of the wholeness of mankind, and mankind's unity with God and the universe.

In relation to Hölderlin's aesthetics, this theory moved on from Kant by way of Schiller. Hölderlin demanded harmonious balance between imagination and understanding, like Kant, and, like Schiller, among all the mental faculties of the individual human, and between the real and the ideal. Beyond that, he also demanded harmony between mankind and nature in a real world, where art could offer an insight into freedom and beauty. However, this realm of freedom and beauty was not noumenal in a Kantian sense, even though we had no conscious, cognitive knowledge of it. By adopting a pantheistic idealism that acknowledged the primacy of Being, or the One and All, Hölderlin could say that our mind, thought and feeling were structured as they were, because they were tiny exemplars of the structure of reality. This means that, whereas Beiser thinks Kant's successors wished to show that art links or provides a bridge between the phenomenal and the noumenal, Hölderlin's poetology rests on a holistic theory that does not need any separately identifiable links, such as art, or any phenomenal, noumenal distinction. His notion of harmonious opposition brought together the real and the ideal, the universal and the particular and all the other dualistic oppositions that had dominated philosophical discussion, and led Schiller to experiment with more than one possible model for human thought and aesthetics. Apparent opposites must not be regarded as excluding each other, whether in life or in the composition of poetry.⁶² Therefore, Hölderlin could agree that art reconciles the phenomenal and noumenal, in that art helps us to gain insight into a better picture of reality than we could otherwise approximate to. And that this true reality is more breathtakingly beautiful than we had imagined.

⁶²J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Aphorismen', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p. 20.

CHAPTER 9

HÖLDERLIN ON POETIC COMPOSITION AND AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

We now move on to examine the implications of Hölderlin's thought for the rôle of the poet, and the appreciation of literature. Together with other essays, *Wenn der Dichter einmal...* (1800) sets out much of Hölderlin's poetic methodology, describing the poetic spirit, or the processes at work when the poet composes a successful poem, and analysing how readers respond to the poetry and judge poetic success. *Wenn der Dichter einmal...* has been taken to show that Hölderlin was one of the writers who gave primacy to the aesthetic over other modes of perception or knowledge.¹ We have suggested he thought them equally and interdependently important. Henrich believed Hölderlin's continued use in *Wenn der Dichter einmal...* of the model of striving, conflict and resolution originated in Fichte, despite recognising the differences between them.² Kreuzer sees *Wenn der Dichter einmal...* as the application to aesthetics of the theory of history outlined in *Das untergehende Vaterland*,³ and Constantine thinks it gives theoretical expression to the poetic practice Hölderlin established while writing *Hyperion* and the poetry of 1796-8.⁴ In view of the way Hölderlin's poetry and novel help illustrate the theory, both these last seem likely.⁵

¹ Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.391.

² Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, (ed.) David S. Pacini, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, pp.228, 229.

'... As is no doubt evident, his theory of poetry depends entirely on the philosophical system he developed while he was Fichte's student'.

³(ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, 'Einleitung', p.XXVII.

⁴ David Constantine, *Hölderlin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p.107.

⁵ see also: Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, author's preface, p.481.

Readers will be extremely reassured to see Constantine admit that parts of *Wenn der Dichter einmal...* are almost impossible to understand or summarise. (David Constantine, *Hölderlin*, Oxford: Oxford

The poet and language⁶

The relationship Hölderlin describes between the ideal and the real, the finite and the infinite, the transition between the two, and the way they form a unity of fused opposites,⁷ occurs not only in the cosmos and in human life, but also in the well-written tragedy. In tragedy, infinite reality resolves itself (=Auflösung) in its union with the finite-ideal. Infinite reality is the Spirit (=Geist). The finite-ideal is the sign, or language (=Zeichen). In their union the spirit gains material content and the sign gains form.⁸ The poet knowingly constructs his work by just occasionally manipulating the grammatical conventions of word order, sentence structure and even sentence order.⁹ Language further contributes to balance within the life and spirit of a poetic work in that the poet has to recognise and decide between the language of

University Press, 1988, p123.) The essay was not published, and, as it stands, is a distillation for Hölderlin's own benefit of what he believed or had discovered, rather than being aimed at a readership. I hope my own readers will appreciate that any insights offered here, therefore, are drawn from the sections of 'Wenn der Dichter...' that I feel I have confidently grasped.

⁶The reader may notice in this section that I do not refer to a well-known text by Heidegger on Hölderlin: Martin Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1951.

This is for two reasons. Firstly, Heidegger's very interesting commentaries on three of Hölderlin's late poems tend to act as ways for him to discuss or develop his own philosophical position, rather than following the approach we have tried to adopt here, of exploring Hölderlin's thought. Theodor Adorno seems to agree with this. See: Theodor Adorno, 'Parataxis: On Hölderlin's late poetry', in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 2, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, pp.111ff.

Secondly, Heidegger – like Benjamin before him - wrote before the discovery of some of the Hölderlin texts now thought to be significant, especially *Sein, Urtheil...* Although this latter essay is not the key to everything Hölderlin wrote, it now effectively places some guide or limit on the freedom of interpretation open to more recent writers.

J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.36.

⁸ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.37.

⁹J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Aphorismen', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.17. Once again, a Schillerian awareness of the mutual benefits of sense and reason.

nature and the language of art, not as his own language, but as the language of art,¹⁰ another element in the *harmoniscentgegengesetzt* whole of the work.

This conscious exercise of skill is illustrated in Hölderlin's own work. Partly because of the way he controlled language, the poems reward swift surface reading, but, in keeping with the poet's training in the classics, also make the same kinds of linguistic demands on a reader as Latin poetry, immersing the reader in a jig-sawlike grammatical reconstruction of his thoughts, which are expressed in a sparse, compressed, allusive language. That this is one of Hölderlin's intentions is confirmed since he at one time planned to publish *Hyperion* in metrical form. Direct comparison of the same passage, taken from both the prose and metrical versions shows just this point.¹¹ The prose version is easy to read, a typical story, containing action, idiomatic speech and illuminating description. The poem has a more elevated tone. It immediately signals that this poet demands thought that goes beyond the simple events recounted, and we therefore reflect on their wider significance. Perhaps Hölderlin was right to publish the final prose version; like his poetry, it addresses the meaning of mankind's presence in the universe and the nature of our relationship with the One and All, but in a fairly accessible way that would appeal to a general readership. Finally, we note that Hölderlin's theoretical works are different again. His sentences are long, exploiting the potential of the German subordinate clause, and demonstrating once more his indebtedness to Latin, or possibly Ancient Greek,

¹⁰J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p. 61.

In these thoughts, Hölderlin is developing Kant's comments on the way aesthetic ideas require us to combine spirit with the letter of language. See:

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:316, §49, p.194.

¹¹Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufe und späte Fragmente: Prosa Entwurf zur metrischen Fassung', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, pp.106 & 109.

paragraph structures. The language is abstract, with comparatively few examples or illustrations, and, although very different from the language forms used in the poetry, it is equally far removed from the spoken idiom or the literary idiom of the novel.

Our discussion so far is not meant as a literary analysis *per se*, but to show how thoroughly 'sentimental' Hölderlin was as a writer, and how he believed that art demanded the full participation of the whole human being. He developed his facility in handling the German language to help educate and improve the German people. Every way in which we respond to a written message can exercise a different area of our faculties. We respond sensuously to the events of a novel; we concentrate our intellectual faculties while understanding a theoretical position; and we need both faculties to enjoy good poetry. Commentators have lamented the fact that Hölderlin the poet was not appreciated in his lifetime;¹² and also expressed the suspicion that his philosophical contribution to German Idealism was greater than his contemporaries acknowledged;¹³ but, given that he saw himself in part as being an educator, we might note that *Hyperion*, his most accessible work, was also, despite initially mixed reviews, his most widely read.¹⁴

¹² Eg. (ed.) Gerhard Kurz, *Interpretationen: Gedichte von Friedrich Hölderlin*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1996, p.7.

¹³ Eg. Manfred Frank, *Philosophical Foundations of Early German Idealism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004.

¹⁴ Eg. unfavourable: 'Rezension des ersten Bandes' von Kaspar Friedrich Manso, in 'Neue allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek', 1798, reproduced in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.263.

Favourable: 'Oberdeutsche, allgemeine Literaturzeitung' (Berne 1799), reproduced in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.268.

In the Austrian Empire, the imperial censor in Vienna categorised the book as *erga schedam*, the third category (out of four). (ibid.) This meant that the book could not be advertised, and could be sold only by approved suppliers, after obtaining the necessary permit. Harmless though the story may seem to us now, the censor's objections would have been both religious and political.

Thus, the spirit and sign in tragedy and, as we may presume, in all literary works are brought into an optimum relationship.¹⁵ Schiller had done this when he interrelated the form and content of the beautiful object in *The Kallias Letters*, but Hölderlin further interlinks the work of tragic drama reciprocally with the wider cycle of time and life in general, so that life and poetic truth have a similar structure.¹⁶ Hölderlin's view of poetic truth is not the same as literal truth. The greatest poetic truth includes error, so long as error is used in the right way and in the right place. The highest poetry can also make use of what is unpoetic. It gains poetic value if used in the right way. The poet has to make rapid and bold decisions on how, whether, or to what extent he should use certain kinds of content, language or form. Doing so successfully, provides the poet with a kind of divine joy. Hölderlin concludes that feeling, ie. the sensuous, empirical side of mankind, and the understanding are both needed in this quite analytical type of activity.¹⁷ Part of the joy of the poet's task is to

¹⁵ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Der untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.37.

¹⁶ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.60.

... also wenn diß der Gang und die Bestimmung der Menschen überhaupt zu seyn scheint, so ist ebendasselbe der Gang und die Bestimmung aller und jeder Poësie,

...therefore if this seems to be the course and disposition of people generally, well, the course and disposition of every kind of poetry is just the same.

¹⁷ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Aphorismen', in ((ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p18.

Nur das ist die wahrste Wahrheit, in der auch der Irrtum, weil sie ihn im ganzen ihres Systems, in seine Zeit und seine Stelle setzt, zur Wahrheit wird. Sie ist das Licht, das sich selber und auch die Nacht erleuchtet. Diß ist auch die höchste Poesie, in der auch das unpoëtische, weil es zu rechter Zeit und am rechten Orte im Ganzen des Kunstwerks gesagt ist, poëtisch wird. Aber hiezu ist schneller Begriff am nöthigsten. Wie kannst du die Sache am rechten Ort brauchen, wenn du noch scheu darüber verweilst, und nicht weist, was an ihr ist, wie viel oder wenig daraus zu machen. Das ist ewige Heiterkeit, ist Gottesfreude, daß mann alles Einzelne in die Stelle des Ganzen setzt, wohin es gehört; deswegen ohne Verstand, oder ohne ein durch und durch organisirtes Gefühl keine Vortrefflichkeit, kein Leben.

The truest truth of all can only be something in which even error becomes truth, because in its whole system it [ie. truth] situates it [ie. error] into its [ie. error's] own time and place. It [ie. The truest truth] is the light that illuminates both itself and the night. This is also the highest *Poesie*, in which even the unpoetic becomes poetic, because it is spoken at the right time and right place in the whole work of art. But, for this, rapid conceptualisation is of the utmost necessity. How can you use anything in the right place, if you are still timidly lingering over it, and don't know what there is in it, or how much or how little to make of it? That is eternal exhilaration, divine joy, when you know you have put every

climb up and down the ladder of enthusiasm - *Begeisterung* - from the most dry, sober and constricting frame of mind to the most exalted and self-transcending.¹⁸

Thus, we already observe that Hölderlin's analysis of how a work of art is created was more complex than Kant's account of beauty or genius in the *Third Critique* suggested, though Kant too wrote of the way genius thinks quickly in order to create its own new laws.¹⁹ However, the example Hölderlin uses to illustrate the most exalted stage of *Begeisterung* is of the general on the battlefield. This is a surprising example, *prima facie*, because it seems rather naïve and immature to think that the excitement of war and the mind of the warrior could be equivalent to the more inward joys of poetry.²⁰ On second thoughts, however, Hölderlin would agree with this objection. In *Hyperion* he shows how the hero's excitement at the prospect of a war of liberation in Greece is dashed. Hölderlin does not in fact praise emotional enthusiasm and over-excitement. At the height of battle the elevation of the general is *Besonnenheit*, his prudence, soberness, deliberateness. He transcends himself in his ability to mentally step back and regard the heat of human feeling and activity dispassionately. The example Hölderlin has chosen here could equally well be used to illustrate Kant's or Schiller's conception of sublimity, thus leaving his readers in no doubt as to how highly we should regard the poet and his creative work. Similarly, this example shows that the understanding is essential to poetic creativity. Only by understanding what effects follow from the open range of possibilities available to

individual thing into its place in the whole where it belongs; therefore: without rational understanding, or without a thoroughly organised feeling, no excellence, no life.

¹⁸J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Aphorismen', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.17.

¹⁹(ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.121 fn.

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:317, §49, p.195.

²⁰ This reference seems to have been misunderstood by Kreuzer (*Theoretische Schriften*, intro., p.XVIII), who calls it 'disgusting' (*den degoutanten Vergleich*).

him, can the poet make the right decisions. Every step in the creation of a work of art has to be conscious, but feeling is the poet's guide. He has to feel, and he has to know what it is to feel fully, if he is to arouse the feelings of his readers. Feeling is both 'bridle and spurs' to his mind, or spirit. It rouses his mind from dull sobriety, but also tempers and softens its harsh intellectual demands.²¹ Thus the senses, the mind in general and, most specifically, the understanding, or theoretical reason, are essential collaborators in the production of poetry. To some extent, this echoes Kant's advocacy of disinterestedness, and his warning about the dangers of encouraging genius without taste,²² but it also claims taste and genius can do nothing without the understanding. According to Hölderlin, clear conceptualisation and the ability to judge causes and effects are as vital as feelings to the success of a poet, so that for him all the faculties are involved in creating a work of art.

Poetic tones

Repeatedly, Hölderlin returns to the need to reconcile sets of opposites. The way he relates actuality to the past or future ideal, the necessary, and the possible, explains a journey, not only through life and time, but also between the various opposing poles, for example, of ideality and reality, or of form and content, that occur in poetry.²³ The danger for the poet, if he fails to achieve the kind of fusion, variation and harmonious opposition that suits his meaning and content, is that his enterprise might collapse into a kind of succession of discrete atoms.²⁴ The poet uses various

²¹ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.43.

²² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:311, §48, p.189 and 5:319, §50, p.196.

²³ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.41.

²⁴ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.48.

...eine Unendlichkeit isolierter Momente (gleichsam eine Atomreihe).

skills to avoid this. Hölderlin's linguistic scheme of 'tones' (*Töne*), is one of these.²⁵ His adoption from music of the word, 'tone', reminds us of Schiller's belief that the boundary lines among the separate arts become blurred as we reach the highest levels of excellence.²⁶ The theory of tones used the idea of the harmoniously opposed whole²⁷ to re-cast the traditional classification of poetic genres that had been accepted in the classical model of composition.²⁸ A writer now had to combine tones to create or match the mood changes in the work of art. Thus, the genres of heroic and lyric were no longer mutually exclusive genres of poetry, but should be introduced into the same work. This created opposition, as well as harmony, because the old poetic categories would remain distinct, even when blended and balanced to achieve an effect on the audience.

But beneath the formal theory, Hölderlin's blended yet opposing tones are another way of communicating the metaphysical message of his general philosophy: poetry helps us realise that the world of Being is present in everything we think and do, and that, in turn, we operate within it. Here Hölderlin brings out the parallels between tragedy and life:

²⁵ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Poetologische Aufzeichnungen; Die Empfindung spricht im Gedichte...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.63.

²⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII: §4, p.155.

²⁷ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.43.

²⁸ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Poetologische Aufzeichnungen', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, pp.63-67.

If Kant had moved away from classicism by distinguishing art from craft, and valuing art more highly, Hölderlin's poetology tended back towards an earlier respect for craft and skill. It is the blending of the tones, and, in the case of his analysis of Homer, the overall effect of Homer's particular skills that creates the aesthetic impact of the work. Perhaps it is also possible to say that, by writing purely as a member of the audience, not as an artist, Kant underestimated how heavily the art he admired relied on the artist's craftsmanship.

Das tragische, in seinem *äußeren Scheine*, *heroische Gedicht* ist, seinem *Grundtone* nach, *idealisches*, und allen Werken dieser Art muß Eine intellectuelle Anschauung zum Grunde liegen welche keine andere seyn kann, als jene Einigkeit mit allem, was lebt, die zwar von dem beschränkteren Gemüthe nicht gefühlt, die in seinen höchsten Bestrebungen nur geahndet, aber vom Geiste [*probably referring to the poetic spirit*] erkannt werden kann...

[Die Einigkeit mit allem, was lebt,...] [geht] aus der Unmöglichkeit einer absoluten Trennung und Vereinzelung hervor, [und es spricht sich] uns am leichtesten aus, dadurch, daß man sagt, die wirkliche Trennung und mit ihr alles wirklich Materielles Vergängliches, so auch die Verbindung und mit ihr alles wirklich Geistige Bleibende, das Objective, als solches, so auch das subjective als solches, seien nur ein Zustand des ursprünglich einigen, in dem es sich befinde...²⁹

Thus, his discussion of the tragic reveals that tragedy is not just heroic, but ideal in tone, giving the reader a view of what humanity is capable of aiming for, and what mankind can attempt to make real. This, in turn, shows that tragedy is based on an intellectual intuition of the ultimate unity of every living thing. Perhaps small-minded people will not be aware of this, but our minds can grasp it in some way, as we realise that the apparent separation of everything into parts, and particularly into objective and subjective, is only one temporary possible condition (Zustand) in which all that is unified exists (sich befinde).

Die in der intellectualen Anschauung vorhandene Einigkeit versinnlichtet sich in eben dem Maße, in welchem sie aus sich herausgeht, in welchem die Trennung ihrer Theile stattfindet, die denn auch nur darum sich trennen, weil sie sich zu einig fühlen, wenn sie im Ganzen dem Mittelpunkte näher sind, oder weil sie sich nicht einig genug fühlen der Vollständigkeit nach, wenn sie Nebentheile sind, vom Mittelpunkte entfernter liegen, oder, der Lebhaftigkeit nach, wenn sie weder Nebentheile, im genannten Sinne, noch wesentliche

²⁹J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das lyrische dem Schein nach', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.70.

The tragic, in its *outer appearance*, *heroic poem*, is, according to its *basic tone*, *ideal*, and, at the very fundament of all works of this kind, there must lie an intellectual intuition, which can be nothing other than that unity with everything that lives, which is admittedly not felt by people of a more limited mentality, and which, in its highest striving, is only apprehended, yet can be recognised by the mind [(tr.) or spirit].

[The unity with everything that lives...] originates in the impossibility of an absolute separation and individuation, and expresses itself most readily in that we say the real separation, along with everything material; and also what connects and along with it everything mental that endures in reality, ie. the objective as such, and likewise, the subjective as such, would be nothing but a condition of the original oneness in which it exists...

Theile im genannten Sinne sind, sondern weil sie noch nicht gewordene, weil sie erst Theilbare Theile sind.³⁰

As Hölderlin explicitly states in the course of the next sentence, an *Übermaß des Geistes*³¹ drives unity towards separateness, which is to say that the ideal strives to appear in reality as something that can be felt or perceived with the senses.³² Thus it is that beauty can become apparent to the whole, physically situated human being. And this too is the process the poet is participating in when creating a work of art.

Hölderlin demonstrates that the best poets have full and self-conscious control of these poetic tones by applying his analysis to Homer.³³ For instance, in Achilles, Homer created the greatest hero of *The Iliad*. However, Homer very carefully avoids adopting the unmodified heroic tone throughout. He engages the readers' respect, sympathy and affection for Achilles by alternating the lyric, as he describes the hero's surroundings and brings them to life, the naïve, as he recounts tales of Achilles' childhood, the tragic, as he shows the fatal imperfections in Achilles' character, and the epic, as he shows the hero's bravery on the battlefield. As Hölderlin observes, one of Homer's most powerful tools is 'Achilles in his tent'. He keeps Achilles away from

³⁰J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das lyrische dem Schein nach', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.71.

The unity that is present in the intellectual intuition becomes sensuous in precisely the degree to which it develops from itself, the degree to which the separation of its parts takes place, parts which only separate themselves insofar as they feel themselves to be too closely united, if they are situated closer to the centre of the whole, or insofar as they do not feel sufficiently united according to the totality, if they are subsidiary parts that lie further away from the centre, or according to liveliness, if they are neither subsidiary parts in the sense we have mentioned, nor essential components in the sense we have mentioned, but because they have not even become anything yet, because they are still only potentially separable parts.

³¹J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das lyrische dem Schein nach', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.71. (Hölderlin's orthography)

³² See also the poem, 'Rousseau', (Poems 1800 - 1805), in Friedrich Hölderlin: *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.237, where this is referred to as,

'Des Lebens Überfluß, das Unendliche,'

'Life's profusion, the infinite.'

³³J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das lyrische dem Schein nach', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, pp.68 - 73.

much of the action and excitement,³⁴ permits the readers to feel they are getting to know Achilles the private man, as he and Patroclus listen to music in his tent, and then is able to create a more impressive and dramatic effect when Achilles bursts upon the scene in full military glory.

If Homer was so skilled, Hölderlin must disagree entirely with Schiller on the nature of Homer's merits; his work was far from being naïve in Schiller's sense.³⁵ Hölderlin uses Schiller's term, 'naïve', as when Homer describes Achilles' childhood, but Homer used and selected his material with great and probably systematic thought. His talent is to blend many technical elements seamlessly, captivating his readers and bringing characters, events and places to life for them. Thus, Hölderlin reveals the successful poet to be engaged in something very calculated. The effect may be 'art' in Kant's sense, but the artistic process seems always to include craftsmanlike activity also.

Creating and feeling the divine moment

Not just the analysis of Homer, but also Hölderlin's general poetology, relate to his epistemological position. As Henrich puts it, poetry has to do more than just bring about a harmonious alteration that we can enjoy when we look at its structure.³⁶ There is another unifying element in any poem besides the way the poet uses the various tones or chooses words and phrases.³⁷ By using and responding to Hölderlin's

³⁴ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Über die verschiedene Arten, zu dichten', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, pp.30 -32.

³⁵ See chapter 5 above.

³⁶ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, (ed.) David S. Pacini, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.229.

and also:

J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.46.

³⁷J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.43.

method, we should become aware of the common source from which all the tendencies in a poem spring. The poetry has to build an awareness of the reconciliation of underlying unity into its own structure, or it could not become, as poetry in fact does, a general reconstitution of life in its own right.³⁸

And since this awareness of the unified structure of the antagonism is presumably part of life itself, it has to be built into the poem. Only in this way can the poem help to bring this awareness into being.³⁹

In fact only the idea of life itself can unite all the otherwise conflicting forces of individuality, generality, ideality, reality, finiteness and infinity that the poet has to balance together. Friedrich Schlegel, as we shall see, used the presence or absence of life in a literary work as one of his main evaluative criteria.⁴⁰ Hölderlin has confirmed quite specific ways in which this could be a plausible basis for judgement. Like the Romantics, he saw his activity as, ‘continuous with, and an integral part of, nature as a whole,’⁴¹ and thus, although attributing to ‘life’ a rôle somewhat similar to that ascribed by Kant to ‘spirit’ in a work of art, unlike Kant, he did more than draw an analogy between art and nature.⁴² The relationship between the objective artistic artefact and the subjective human response is no longer like that between a possibly random manifold of perception and an inexplicable, but specialised, *sensus communis*. It is a relationship among aspects of a far larger organic whole, situated within the omnipresence of Being.

³⁸ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, ‘Wenn der Dichter einmal...’, in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.44.

³⁹ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, (ed.) David S. Pacini, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.229.

⁴⁰ See chapter 11 below.

⁴¹ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.76.

⁴² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:313, §49, p.191.

Thus, the aesthetic function of Hölderlin's *gemeinschaftliche Seele*, that enables the artist to communicate and interact with an audience, is grounded in his claim that the collective life is also the feeling the living have for themselves and is equivalent to change in general,⁴³ since all humans and all nature are essentially united in the One and All of Being. Poetically this is expressed in the poem *Der Archipelagus* (1800/1801),⁴⁴ which speaks of the strength and joy that comes when 'Ein Geist allen gemein sei',⁴⁵ but tells how fragile and fleeting this condition can be, as people are tempted back into unproductive individuality. In the same poem Hölderlin describes how, if our minds can metaphorically rise above the threatening waters, we can come to understand this communal soul, 'Diese Göttersprache, das Wechseln / und das Werden'.⁴⁶ If the poet accepts the import of what Hölderlin is saying, he will not only have understood the nature of his task and the best method of composition, but will also be able to help the reading public gain intimations of their own inner make up and potentialities.⁴⁷ To express this in the most simplistic terms, the poet can help his public grasp the meaning of life.

⁴³J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.39.

See chapter 7, p.157 above for references to:

Die gemeinschaftliche Seele, die allem gemein, und jedem eigen ist.

The communal soul that is common to all, and personal to each.

⁴⁴ Friedrich Hölderlin: *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.253.

Referred to also by Kreuzer in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, Introduction, fn. p.XXVIII.

⁴⁵ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtlich Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.261.

One spirit is common to all.

⁴⁶ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtlich Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.263.

The language of the gods, change and becoming.

⁴⁷ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, pp.39–41.

Because the poet's relationship with his public is structured in this way, the spirit with which he is empowered and over which he has power when he writes well, enables him to generate the climactic divine moment, or caesura,⁴⁸ around which every successful work of literature and the response of its readers pivots.⁴⁹ The poet perceives and communicates that moment as an interruption in the harmonious sequence of a poem, that is nevertheless required by its harmonious structure, an interruption that is harmoniously incorporated into the formal structure of the poem itself.⁵⁰ For readers that moment arises from and means nothing without what has gone before, and they realise that a resolution, disaster or some other working through of consequences must occur as a result of, or in response to it. This is the point of catastrophe in a tragedy, the moment in which 'spirit in its infinity can be felt'.⁵¹ In every poem there is a mid-point, a natural centre to which the rest of the poetic work refers, through our simultaneous awareness of the rest of the work. There are three elements in the divine moment: feeling (on the reader's part) itself provides poetic character that is neither genius nor art; secondly there is a poetic individuality that constitutes the identity of inspiration and the perfection of genius (on the artist's part); and finally there is art (perfection in the work). Thus, the reader, the poet, and the work of art itself all help create the caesura. As such, it is the manifestation of the

⁴⁸J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Anmerkungen zur Antigonä' in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.102.

Louth draws attention to the way Hölderlin, in his notes to the translations of *Antigone* and *Oedipus the King*, adopts this term from the world of classical French Alexandrine verse rhythms. (see: Charlie Louth, 'Review of (ed.) Aris Fioretos, "The Solid Letter: readings of Friedrich Hölderlin"', in *The Modern Language Review*, vol.97, no.1, Jan 2002, pp.224 - 225.)

⁴⁹J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.41.

⁵⁰ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, (ed.) David S. Pacini, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.229. The book says, 'harmony structure', but I presume this is a misprint.

⁵¹ Quoted in English in David E. Wellbery, 'The transformation of rhetoric', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, , *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Vol. 5, Romanticism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.198. from *Wenn der Dichter...* – though I have not found the original phrase.

infinite;⁵² and an insight for reader and poet into the One and All of Being. The reader reaches a point of poetic completeness, the ‘transcendental instant’,⁵³ simultaneously aware of the superficially linear and progressive written text.

As is no doubt evident, he derived this idea from Fichte, but deployed it in a way that made it a powerful means for an analysis of superb aesthetic structure.⁵⁴

The poet must preserve this temporal unity, so that, at every moment, the thread of the reader’s memory of what has passed can still resonate, and all the various moods already presented can remain present before him.⁵⁵ The ability we have to hold the thread of a poetic structure in our minds is something we have already encountered - *Ahndung* - that form of memory that can also refer forwards to the future and to future expectation.⁵⁶ Thus the reader feels the backwards and forwards motion of the reciprocity involved in the harmonious opposition that is present in all aspects of the

⁵² J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, ‘Wenn der Dichter einmal...’, in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p. 49.

Dieser Sinn ist eigentlich poetischer Charakter, weder Genie noch Kunst, poetische Individualität – und dieser allein ist die Identität der Begeisterung und die Vollendung des Genie und der Kunst, die Vergegenwärtigung des Unendlichen, der göttliche Moment gegeben.

This sense [ie. when the thread of memory holds all the harmonies and contradictions together] is really poetic character, neither genius nor art, poetic individuality – and to this [poetic individuality] alone is given identity of inspiration and the perfection of genius and art, the realisation of the infinite, the divine moment.

⁵³ Henrich gives no reference, but see J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, ‘Wenn der Dichter einmal...’, in *Theoretische Schriften*, (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p. 49.

⁵⁴ Dieter Henrich, (ed. & tr.) David S. Pacini, *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.230.

⁵⁵ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, ‘Wenn der Dichter einmal...’, in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.49.

⁵⁶ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, ‘Wenn der Dichter einmal...’, in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.58, fn. p.124.

Henrich also provides a useful quotation from Fichte to which the account of present time in *Das untergehende Vaterland...* and of the divine poetic moment are closely related:

Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *GgW*, pp.350 - 351; English: *SK*, p.195. Quoted in Henrich, p.230. cp. F. Hölderlin, *Das untergehende Vaterland...*

The positing self, through the most wondrous of its powers,... holds fast the perishing accident long enough to compare it with that which supplants it. This power it is - almost always misunderstood - which from inveterate opposites knits together a unity; which intervenes between elements that would mutually abolish each other, and thereby preserves them both; it is that which alone makes possible life and consciousness.

poem's unity.⁵⁷ A poetic work might typically contain only one caesura, but it is for the poet to exercise his skill and decide where and when it will occur; or he might use plots and subplots, language, form and structure to develop a series or well-placed number of caesurae, to which readers would respond at various levels and in varying degrees.

If we consider *Hyperion*, not only does the structure of the novel move back and forth within its own time scale, containing as it does reflections, reminiscences, reports, contemporaneous accounts, and hints about an as yet unread future, but the lives of *Hyperion* and his fellow characters reach points of climax, which they themselves recognise as divine and inspired; these are always points of precious stillness in a recklessly onward moving life. The readers' view of these characters' bliss, moreover, is always coloured by having already read the author's veiled hints that all may not run onwards quite as smoothly as might temporarily appear likely in that divine moment. Thus, Hölderlin includes the self-consciousness of art as another of the factors that must be balanced, or suspended, in the *harmoniscentgegengesetzt*. The artist must know the exact moment at which to rouse the reader from his or her fantasy world, in which poetic life has merged with real life, and balance illusion with dramatic irony in order to create another dimension or layer of unity. As David Wellbery points out, this is a specifically tragic form of irony.⁵⁸ As we shall later see, it gives a somewhat different dimension to the more playful conception of romantic irony employed by Friedrich Schlegel.⁵⁹

⁵⁷J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.49.

⁵⁸ David Wellbery, 'The transformation of rhetoric', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 5, Romanticism, p.198.

⁵⁹ See chapter 12 below.

Unavoidably, given Hölderlin's holistic view of the cosmos, his model also applies back again to the everyday world. In Pacini's translation:

So poetry makes us 'feel ourselves as equal and one with everything in the original source of all the works and deeds of man.'⁶⁰

By analysing the nature of time, and developing the concept of *Ahndung*, Hölderlin has revealed that life is lived and experienced in the same way as a poetic work, that both conform to the same model. Like the characters in *Hyperion*, we have those moments of significant stillness in which we feel at one with Being. Without understanding or being able consciously to control our feeling, we know we are at one with ourselves and nature, with the infinite that is in everything and to which we shall return. At the most extreme, the end of a life reveals it to have been a complete entity. The introduction to the *Hyperion* fragment tells us that the ensuing pages will demonstrate our eccentric path, and the varied individual ways in which humans negotiate their way through life, gradually changing their direction as their level of education (*Bildung*) improves.⁶¹ However varied our individual cases, the same path, ultimately, is followed by everyone, though some individuals perhaps never progress

⁶⁰J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Der Gesichtspunct aus dem wir das Altertum anzusehen haben', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.23.

...so daß wir im *Urgunde* [sic] *aller Werke und Thaten der Menschen uns gleich und einig fühlen mit allen, sie seien so groß oder so klein, aber in der besondern Richtung die wir nehmen...* [Hölderlin's emphasis].

Dieter Henrich, (ed. & tr.) David S. Pacini, *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.229, credits the quotation as: Friedrich Hölderlin, *Der Gesichtspunct aus dem wir das Altertum anzusehen haben*, 1799, (ed.) Friedrich Beißner, in *StA*, vol. IV, 1, 1961, p.222.

Pacini's translation is taken from: 'The perspective from which we have to look at antiquity', in *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*, (ed.) trans. Thomas Pfau, Albany: SUNY Press, 1988, p.40.

However, the words 'So poetry makes us' in the quotation above are Henrich's, not Hölderlin's.

⁶¹ Dieter Henrich, (ed.) David S. Pacini, trans., *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.228, cites the occurrence of the term 'eccentric path' in the preface to *Fragment von Hyperion*, as we travel from pure innocence to more or less perfect cultivation.

as far as others.⁶² The various incompatible, simultaneous tendencies of life, that are variants on the Fichtean centripetal and centrifugal drives,⁶³ appear within the life of the poetic work as another conflict is resolving itself, in the form of a three-fold reciprocal relationship between knowledge or insight (*Erkenntnis*) and language, as knowledge recalls (*Ahnung*) language, and language reminds us of our knowledge. We encounter these three as: 1) Knowledge as the pure, unreflecting feeling of life and of the determined infinity that contains it; 2) Knowledge as the attempt to reproduce itself and find itself again after the dissonances within its fruitless inner reflection and striving; and thus 3) knowledge transcending itself and finding itself again in infinity – that is, through a higher, divine receptivity to its whole inner and outer life.⁶⁴ Although Fichte's drives and the interactions between knowledge and language are found in different areas of life or creativity, they cluster around the same difficulty of reconciling self-conscious, active striving; unreflecting, naïve calm; and the attainment of a conscious but reconciled awareness of larger meaning. Even taking this theme of instability and readjustment into account,

⁶² Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Fragment von Hyperion', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.83.

⁶³ However, Frank suggested that Fichte's version may be an adaptation of Hölderlin's. See:

Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: SUNY press, 2004, p.121.

J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.53.

⁶⁴J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.58.

...1) noch unreflectirte reine Empfindung des Lebens war, der bestimmten Unendlichkeit worinn sie enthalten ist, 2) nachdem sie sich in den Dissonanzen des innerlichen Reflectirens und Strebens und Dichtens wiederholt hatte, und nun, nach diesen vergebene[n] Versuchen, sich innerlich wiederzufinden und zu reproduciren, nach diesen verschwiegenen Ahndungen, die auch ihre Zeit haben müssen, über sich selbst hinausgeht, und in der ganzen Unendlichkeit sich wiederfindet... d.h... durch diese höhere göttliche Empfänglichkeit ihres ganzen innern und äußeren Lebens mächtig und inne wird.

[translator's note: various subordinate clauses and sub-phrases have been omitted from this lengthy sentence. They are clauses that have not been used in the English paraphrase given above. I hope these ellipses have not distorted what Hölderlin appears to have been saying at this point in his text.]

the life of human beings points to an end, which is the understanding of the essentiality of all that we undergo. ...Once we understand that all these antagonistic tendencies and all the attempted compromises in our lives are essential, we can attain peace without resignation,⁶⁵

which is how we begin to grasp the dynamism of life and history in any beautiful work of art, but especially in poetry. This is because poetry is both successive and symbolic. Life, that underlies everything, is evoked by the applied symbolism of poetry.⁶⁶

Other works, besides *Hyperion*, illustrate this theme. The second version of *Der Wanderer*⁶⁷ exemplifies how the content and structure of a poem reflect both Hölderlin's methodology and mankind's path through life.⁶⁸ The themes of belonging, lost Eden, irretrievable innocence, restlessness, striving and conscious return, though never to the exact same starting point, are present in just the way outlined in *Wenn der Dichter einmal...* The poem pivots on the moment at which the poet's reflections on his past life and hopes for the future encounter the future reality of his return to the

⁶⁵Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, (ed.), trans. David S. Pacini, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.228.

In this section he is effectively paraphrasing the following references, in which Hölderlin touches the topic of the symbolic significance of poetry:

J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Fragment philosophischer Briefe', (alternatively called: 'Über die Religion') in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.11.

also: J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.59.

⁶⁶ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.61.

...zum Grunde liegende Leben durch diß verwandte Zeichen hervorrufen.

⁶⁷Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, pp.184, 272.

The first version was written in 1797. It does not carry through to the moments of disillusion and reconciliation included in the second version in 1800.

⁶⁸ A very much more detailed discussion of this large subject, ie. of how Hölderlin's later poems consciously put his theory of poetics into practice is provided by Cyrus Hamlin, 'The Philosophy of Poetic Form', in (ed.) Aris Fioretos, *The solid letter: readings of Friedrich Hölderlin*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999, pp.291-320.

village of his birth.⁶⁹ The shock of that moment colours and gives meaning to the whole poem, and on a first reading, redirects the reader to reflect ironically on the opening stanzas. Moreover, the poem itself hovers between the events remembered and reported by the protagonist, the events he is experiencing in the present moment, that the poet has artificially created within the lifeworld of the poem, the events he dreams of experiencing and then those he suddenly realises are about to take place. Opposition, wholeness, the unifying thread provided by the reader's memory and anticipatory understanding, the moment of catastrophe, all are present in the poem, just as Hölderlin advocates in his essay. The wanderer himself exemplifies the life course referred to continually by Hölderlin. He is the man who unknowingly and innocently lives an idyllic life, but impetuously rejects it as soon as he gains a mature level of self-consciousness. His subsequent restlessness is impelled by his desire to regain that lost idyll, but his hopes are dashed, as he realises that however free he might have felt in his early years, that choice is now closed to him. His final sense of reconciliation and acceptance then complete the cycle set up by Hölderlin's poetic model and general philosophy. The poetry also enables us to reinterpret our existence in general. From such poems we learn, not just that any particular protagonist is looking forward to a return home, still less that Hölderlin longed to go back to his boyhood home, but that humanity is looking for a home, as we try to discover where we belong in the shifting whole of the cosmos. This message is conveyed in *Der Wanderer*, *Hyperions Schicksalslied*⁷⁰ and others.

⁶⁹ For a fuller discussion of the themes and structure of this poem, see Maria Behre, 'Das Messen der Zeit', in (ed.) Gerhard Kurz, *Interpretationen: Gedichte von Friedrich Hölderlin*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1999, pp.113-123.

⁷⁰ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.623.

Our earlier discussion of the nature and origins of Hölderlin's general philosophy has, to a large extent, prepared us for this account of Hölderlin's aesthetics. Although restless life and the desire for return resemble some of the terms of Fichte's philosophy,⁷¹ *Wenn der Dichter einmal...* contradicts Fichte, in both life and poetry. The essay claims that asserting an exclusive relation between the conscious self and the Absolute is insufficient to generate anything other than positive nothingness.⁷² The subjective self must relate to a freely chosen external object. Now, admittedly, in the Fichtean philosophy, 'external objects' are further defined in terms of resistance experienced by the self. But, the significant point here is that Hölderlin believes the poet's choice of external content for his work must be free, if poetry is not to degenerate into empty mannerism or triviality.

Zwischen dem Ausdrücke (der Darstellung) und der freien idealischen Behandlung liegt die Begründung und Bedeutung des Gedichts. Sie ist, die dem Gedichte seinen Ernst, seine Festigkeit, seine Wahrheit giebt, sie sichert das Gedicht davor, daß die freie idealische Behandlung nicht zur leeren Manier, und Darstellung nicht zu Eitelkeit werde.⁷³

Thus, the choice of external content gives meaning to the poetic work and grounds it. Hölderlin goes on to say that, in making its own world, the poetic spirit must also affirm its own individuality. Since, however, poetic spirit of itself cannot recognise individuality, it needs an external object and, in particular, the kind of thing that it can accept. Thus, the individuality it has chosen for itself for the time being, and whose

⁷¹ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, (ed.), trans. David S. Pacini, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.228.

Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism 1781 - 1801*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, p.402.

⁷² J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.50.

⁷³ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.43.

Between expression (the way of representing) and free idealistic treatment lies the rationale and meaning of the poem. That is what gives the poem its seriousness, its firmness, its truth; it secures the free, idealistic treatment of the poem against becoming empty mannerism, and secures its representation against mere vanity.

character is determined by the material it has presently chosen, is recognisable and can be grasped freely.⁷⁴ We must note the wide range of external objects that both Hölderlin - and his characters - choose as material for the content of his literary work. Still onboard ship, the wanderer addresses the mighty ether, the eternal gods, the trinity of ether, earth and light, who have been and are with him constantly. Here the mixture of mythical, Christian and pantheistic spirituality that preceded and survived Hölderlin's interest in Fichtean philosophy reinforces his message. If we turn to other poems from the same period, such as *Der gefesselte Strom*,⁷⁵ and *Dichterberuf*,⁷⁶ these too demonstrate the reflexive pattern of unified harmony and opposition outlined in the methodology, and freely choose from a variety of external sources in order to create works of art, using myth or any other appropriate imaginative content to provide an insight into life.

Generalising from the specific

Our examination of Hölderlin's theoretical work so far reveals that he has chosen his content, knowing its purpose and effect, and the best way to present it. We have also touched the question of whose experience *Der Wanderer* communicates, and whether individual experiences and personal relationships are being portrayed. This introduces another of the reconciliations among opposites that the poet must effect. The poet must use his most intimate thoughts and experiences to create something to which the reader can relate as if it were his own experience, while at the same time creating something that is generalised and completely free of its original associations with the poet as an individual. Poet and reader come together in this

⁷⁴ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.50.

⁷⁵ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.304.

⁷⁶ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.305.

process of uniting the particular and the general.⁷⁷ This also means there is never any such thing - in life or poetry - as pure poetic life.⁷⁸ This is the poetical application of the claim in *Das untergehende Vaterland...* that the particular and the universal dominate each other reciprocally.⁷⁹ Abstractly expressed, the creative writer must resolve the pressures existing among the pure poetic spirit, the general and the particular; in a state of perpetual conflict, each of these attempts to dominate and oust the others,⁸⁰ always combining in some way. As opposites, they are competing moods that strive to determine the pure poetic spirit by confronting it and opposing it with everything individual and everything general, but all three are bound together and unified in the condition of pure harmonious opposition, which is in fact, life as such.⁸¹ The poetic whole that strives onwards is an instance of life itself, dominated by this struggle between the material (ie. the individual), the formal (ie. the general) and the pure.⁸²

⁷⁷ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Texte zur Theorie der Tragödie: Die tragische Ode... (Grund zum Empedokles)', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.80.

J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.61.

⁷⁸ Note that Schiller qualifies his discussion of beauty in a similar way, saying that the reality of human existence means that no one has ever had an entirely aesthetic experience, because, in fact, each individual person is externally conditioned in a slightly different way, and therefore has a lop-sided relationship in the relative strengths of the drives.

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII: §4, p.153.

⁷⁹ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.37, 38.

⁸⁰ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.46.

⁸¹ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, pp.44, 46.

⁸² This need to balance the pure, the general and the particular is explained in two texts:

Firstly: J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, pp. 61, 62.

...ein bestimmender Act der schöpferischen Reflexion des Künstlers ...aus der Summe seines äußern und innern Lebens, das mehr oder weniger auch das meinige ist,...

The poet occupies his own unique position as a human being, in a certain landscape, surrounded by certain people, and affected by certain events at a certain time. He has found his own 'eccentric path' in relation to worldly reality and his intuition of Being. Thus, the poet writes very specifically as himself. But what he writes, the characters he creates and the things they say and do are not himself.⁸³ They are separate creations through whom he speaks to others. What we know already of Hölderlin's thought indicates how his poetry or fictional prose can achieve this. We all share an awareness of divinity.⁸⁴ Through 'love' we are capable of knowing, empathising and sharing the thoughts and feelings of others. Therefore, we can use our experience of others and their experiences to construct a shared understanding. The poet's readers are not consciously aware of this, they simply read the poetry, take up the characters and events into their own thoughts and memory, and make them their own, in the sense that they relate the creations of the poet to their own time, place and experiences and think of them in that context. Thus the successful poet creates something very personal and specific that is nevertheless capable of achieving the highest level of generality.⁸⁵ Homer was an example of a writer able to affect an eighteenth century public profoundly, even though *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* were produced relative to the utterly alien circumstances of Ancient Greece. At the same time, however, Hölderlin acknowledged that, while we may idealise and generalise

a determining act of the artist's creative reflection ...from the summation of his outer and inner life, which is more or less mine also...

Secondly: J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Der tragische Ode (Allgemeine Grund)', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.80.

⁸³ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.61.

J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Die tragische Ode (Grund zum *Empedocles*)', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.90.

⁸⁴ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Fragment philosophischer Briefe', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, pp.11, 12.

⁸⁵ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Die tragische Ode (Allgemeine Grund)', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.80.

from the Greek dramatists, men like Sophocles were always working in their own realm and era, and, like any poet, reflected the limitations of their own age.⁸⁶ The poet is thus especially privileged, in that he holds the power to create harmonious opposition between the particular and the general, and to unite them.

Hyperion also illustrates this position. *Hyperion* is an eighteenth century character. He is not Hölderlin; he is Hölderlin's creation, though based in part, unavoidably, on Hölderlin's experience of himself, while nevertheless operating primarily as a means for illustrating his philosophical position in practice.⁸⁷ Hölderlin presents his characters so that we identify with their experiences, but each reader has to do this on his or her own terms. *Hyperion's* experience in the novel is of modern - or eighteenth century - Greece, but his experience of modernity is coloured by his love of Homer and his intimate knowledge of Greek myth and legend. Thus the reader has to empathise somehow with an image of ancient Greece that is constantly qualified by the way in which it contrasts with an eighteenth century reality, which is yet not reality, because it is the reported experience of Hölderlin's fictional character. Educated eighteenth century readers thus brought many personal preconceptions and background experiences to their understanding and appreciation of the novel. It shows how Hölderlin implemented his theory of harmonious opposition, and how too he set readers contemplating on what might now be called the human condition. Even through the novel's epistolary structure, that was generally becoming either old-

⁸⁶ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Anmerkungen zur Antigonä', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.109.

⁸⁷ David Constantine, *Hölderlin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, ch.5, pp.83ff.

Constantine has shown in these pages how closely *Hyperion* can be related to people and events in Hölderlin's own life.

fashioned or unusual by that time,⁸⁸ Hölderlin informs us, not of events as they happen, but of a protagonist's reflections on them.

Hölderlin's view of the nature of poetry, or of art in general, thus develops Schiller's view of sentimentality even further, by valuing the conscious intervention of the writer, a contrast with Kant or earlier aestheticians, such as Reynolds, for whom the artist was invisible. At the same time, however, he echoes some of Herder's opinions on the more culturally specific nature of human production, as he warns us not to ignore the cultural and historical context of any writer.⁸⁹ The writer is always both limited and enriched by the influence of his own time, and writes within contemporary limitations.⁹⁰ Hölderlin's poetry demonstrates this, as he realised. Yet, partly based on his experience as the published translator of a number of key classical texts, he still admired the great poetry of Greek antiquity. He therefore used myth in the way that we may suppose, following Schiller's account in *Naïve and Sentimental*, it was intended to be used. From our engagement with a mythical story we gain its philosophical, moral or religious message. Through myth the writer balances and fuses reality and the ideal, the physical and the mental. At its best myth enables the reader to use both critical and emotional faculties.⁹¹ The essay, *Der Gesichtspunct aus dem wir das Altertum anzusehen haben* sums up the way Hölderlin saw his contemporaries using classical material:

⁸⁸ Marshall Brown, 'Theory of the novel', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vol. 5, Romanticism*, Cambridge UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.257.

⁸⁹ John A. McCarthy, 'Criticism and Experience: Philosophy and Literature in the German Enlightenment', in (ed.) Nicholas Saul, *Modern German Literature and Philosophy 1700-1990*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.46.

See chapter 5 above.

⁹⁰ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Anmerkungen zur Antigonä' in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.109.

⁹¹ See Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, Vorrede von *Hyperion*, p.481.

Wir träumen von Bildung, Frömmigkeit pp. und haben gar keine, sie ist angenommen - wir träumen von Originalität und Selbstständigkeit, wir glauben lauter Neues zu sagen, und alles diß ist doch Reaction, eine milde Rache gegen die Knechtschaft, womit wir uns verhalten haben gegen das Altertum...⁹²

Therefore, freed of any servile attitude, he consciously made contemporary use of the classical legacy. Hyperion, named after the offspring of Apollo, the sun god, loves and is continually regenerated by the sun, Plato's consistent metaphor for goodness, while the geography, mythology and philosophy of Ancient Greece often provide source material for Hölderlin's poetry. He drew parallels with contemporary Germany and the republican cause,⁹³ or blurred the distinction between classical myth and Christian imagery,⁹⁴ thus using the classical heritage to guide readers to reflect on their conventional view of life and the cosmos.

To Hölderlin the continuity of time provided a fine balance between endings, decay and fresh beginnings, between the divisible and the indivisible. In terms of nature and humanity, his view had practical effects on the way a life is lived,⁹⁵ and encouraged us to achieve a self-reconciled but active life. He saw every lived moment as points during which memory both created and participated in a single, historical process, so that the continuity and integration of time also suggests a sense in which

⁹² J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Der Gesichtspunkt aus dem wir das Altertum anzusehen haben', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.22.

We dream of education, piety... and have none, it is accepted – we dream of originality and independence, we think we are talking pure novelty, and yet all this is just reaction, a mild revenge against the servile relationship we have formed with antiquity.

⁹³ See especially, *Hyperion*, finally published in finished form in 1797 and 1799, though Hölderlin never visited Greece himself.

Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001.

⁹⁴ For instance in poems, such as *Brot und Wein* (1800/1801).

Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.285.

⁹⁵ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, pp.33 - 35.

we are not remote from antiquity. Each individual life or person is whole, and every level of existence, extending to the universe itself, is whole. We and Hölderlin must accept and try to understand the nature of that wholeness, in the resolution of its opposing tendencies.⁹⁶

All the aspects of Hölderlin's poetics discussed so far show how he believed the poem's unified structure is part of life itself, but this is not only important as an illustration of how all the strands in Hölderlin's thought draw together into a single unity. As Henrich says, it is a way of conceiving of aesthetics that is specific to literature. It

depends the misleading analogy from visual perception that prompts the aestheticians into thinking we only have to describe structures at which we are 'looking'.⁹⁷

Therefore, it is also an improved aesthetics of literature. Kant, especially, had a rather visual, perceptual account of the judgement of taste. Schiller referred to several branches of art, but Hölderlin specifically wants us to feel the structure of life or of a poem. This aim was probably directed against even older aestheticians than Kant or Schiller. He deplored the bare formalism supposedly typical of eighteenth century life. He wanted to infuse life, colour and content into the dead, mechanistic methods that he thought still predominated. Equally, he wanted to avoid the complete absence of form or rule that he believed was tempting some of his contemporaries into bad poetry.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Das untergehende Vaterland', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, pp.35.

⁹⁷ Dieter Henrich, (ed. & tr.) David S. Pacini, *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.229.

⁹⁸ David Constantine, *Hölderlin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p.117.

The significance of beauty

The final step in our survey of Hölderlin's theory of how the poet, poetry and the world interrelate is to consider where beauty fits into his scheme. We have discussed literary success by referring to the use of poetic tones, harmoniously reconciled opposites and divine caesurae, and also to the essential operation of feeling as a way of appreciating them; but so far without referring to beauty. Here both Plato and Heraclitus, and our earlier references to them provide a further way of characterising the *harmoniscentgegengesetzt*,⁹⁹ providing ancient credentials for some ideas we have already identified in Fichte and Schiller.¹⁰⁰ The two key quotations are those we have used already, firstly:

Wir hätten auch keine Ahndung von jenem unendlichen Frieden, von jenem Seyn, im einzigen Sinne des Worts, wir strebten gar nicht, die Natur mit uns zu vereinigen, wir dächten und wir handelten nicht, es wäre überhaupt gar nichts, (für uns) wir wären selbst nichts, (für uns) wenn nicht dennoch jene unendliche Vereinigung, jenes Seyn, im einzigen Sinne des Worts vorhanden wäre. Es ist vorhanden – als Schönheit; es wartet, um mit Hyperion zu reden, ein neues Reich auf uns, wo die Schönheit Königin ist.¹⁰¹

Here Hölderlin envisages beauty being present in the world in a way that is rather similar to the relationship between Platonic particulars and universals, in that worldly beauty can eventually lead the judicious observer to a fuller understanding of beauty in its perfection. We do not know where Plato's World of Forms was, though it was accessible to the intellect. Hölderlin, by contrast, has devoted a considerable amount of effort to showing us where the perfection of beauty is. It is in the totality of

⁹⁹Peter Fenves, 'Measure for Measure', in (ed.) Aris Fioretos, *The solid letter: readings of Friedrich Hölderlin*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999, p.31.

¹⁰⁰ see chapter 6 above.

¹⁰¹ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorletzte Fassung von *Hyperion*', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.157.

If we also had no awareness [= memory + presentiment (tr.)] of that endless peace, of that Being, in the only sense of the word, we would not strive at all to unite nature with ourselves, we would not think and act, it [Being] would be absolutely nothing at all (for us), we ourselves would be nothing (for us) unless, nevertheless, that endless union, that Being, in the only sense of the word, were present. It is present - as beauty; a new kingdom, if we may use Hyperion's words, is waiting for us, in which Beauty is Queen.

everything in the workings of ourselves and the world around us. It is the One and All. This does not make it any easier to recognise than Plato's World of Forms was, but the implication is that anything that introduces us to the One and All also introduces us to beauty. Thus, the divine moment in a literary work, the full appreciation of the fleeting moment and reconciliation with nature and ourselves are all ways that develop our sensitivity to the 'truest truth' of beauty. Hölderlin's favoured texts, Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* are sympathetic in their treatment of the art of poetry and acknowledgement of the divine madness of the poetic muse.¹⁰²

The second key quotation we have encountered relates to Heraclitus.

Das große Wort, das *εν διαφερον εαυτω* (das Eine in sich selber unterschiedene) des Heraklit...[sic] ist das Wesen der Schönheit, und ehe das gefunden war, gabs keine Philosophie.¹⁰³

This quotation seems to confirm the claim that the diversity of the beauty in our world points us towards a greater unified perfection. Once again we can conclude that the ways in which we become aware of the One and All, whether in art or nature, also show us instances of beauty. The reference to Heraclitus is repeated in *Hyperion* shortly after the quotation we have already used:

Leuchtet aber das göttliche *εν διαφερον εαυτω*, das Ideal der Schönheit der strebenden Vernunft, so fodert sie nicht blind, und weiß, warum, wozu sie fodert.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Hugh Bredin and Liberato Santoro-Brienza, *Philosophies of Art and Beauty: introducing aesthetics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p.32.

Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.61.

¹⁰³ see Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, 1:2, p.559.

The great saying, the *en diapheron heauto* (the One that is distinguished into itself / the One that is distinguished within itself), of Heraclitus... is the essence of beauty, and before that was discovered, there was no philosophy.

[translator's note: I have not really been able to confirm this, but I suspect it would be possible to adopt my first alternative translation rather than my second, which would make Hölderlin's overall position more consistent.]

¹⁰⁴ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, p.561.

Once we have begun to appreciate beauty, we have some idea of what we could be aiming for. Hölderlin perhaps expects that contact with both art and nature will enhance our ability to recognise natural beauty, and thence, to reach a point of reconciliation in our lives. This is also a way of reconciling beauty and sublimity. Returning to the way Kant and then Schiller understood beauty and the sublime, we see that for Kant sublimity was an often strangely pleasurable condition of the human reason, when faced with a power or phenomenon of nature so great that no idea was adequate to it;¹⁰⁵ beauty was a free play between imagination and understanding sparked by a variety of possible objects that we are therefore entitled to call beautiful.¹⁰⁶ In some ways they were analogous, one relating to reason and the ideas, the other to concepts and the imagination. For Schiller, beauty was a condition of apparent harmony in the object,¹⁰⁷ recognised by a human mind that was also in harmony with itself.¹⁰⁸ Sublimity was a sense in the human mind that blind natural power might be able to dominate or destroy human physicality, but not the superiority of the moral reason.¹⁰⁹ This suggested that beauty and sublimity might be similar in kind, though different in some way in their degree and effect.¹¹⁰ Since we have already suggested that, for Hölderlin, the man or woman who frees him or herself

But if the divine *en diapheron heauto*, the ideal of beauty, illuminates the striving reason, then it does not demand blindly, and knows why and to what end it is demanding.

¹⁰⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:256, §26, p.139.

¹⁰⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 5:211, §6, p.96, 5:230, §16, p.114.

¹⁰⁷ See references to *The Kallias Letters* in chapter 1 above.

¹⁰⁸ See references to *The Aesthetic Letters* in chapter 4 above.

¹⁰⁹ Slightly more problematically, it was also identified with the definition of 'energetic beauty' that Schiller never explored in the *Aesthetic Letters*.

See: Nicholas Saul, 'Aesthetic Humanism 1790-1830: Weimar classicism', in (ed.) Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, *The Cambridge History of German Literature*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.219.

¹¹⁰ Friedrich Schiller, 'Ueber das Erhabene', in *Schillers Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 4, Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1879, pp.726-738. Available at: <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/?id=12&xid=2405&kapitel=1&cHash=f02826dfcf2> [accessed 17.06.08]

from the pressures of fate, and freely acknowledges the fundamental unity of humankind and all creation, acts sublimely, we can establish another relationship between beauty and sublimity. The path Hölderlin recommends leads the human being through a gradually increasing appreciation of beauty to a point at which he or she both achieves sublimity and demonstrates his or her personal freedom.¹¹¹ Thus, he has almost exactly fleshed out Schiller's tag, 'it is through beauty that we walk to freedom'.¹¹²

Although Schiller wrote with practical intentions, we can see that, by comparison with Hölderlin, he barely scratched the surface of the possible ways in which an epistemology can connect with literary theory. He recognised that, in a work of art, every detail is essential to the success of the whole, though we must not be distracted by focusing on individual details,¹¹³ but he did not examine the options available to the poet when he seeks to build that whole, or fill in those details. Hölderlin's theory of tones, and his identification of the places occupied by language, meaning,¹¹⁴ expression, form, content, characterisation, event, show his self-conscious articulation of the technical skills required by the poet. Indeed, he was unusual among writers of his day, in adapting the traditional genre of rhetorical theory in such detail.¹¹⁵ Baumgarten's was perhaps the most famous previous attempt to do this.¹¹⁶

Yet Hölderlin was also able to relate these skills to a wider view of the poet's place in

¹¹¹ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.55.

¹¹² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, II, p.9.

¹¹³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII: §6, p.157.

¹¹⁴ J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.58.

¹¹⁵ David Wellbery, 'The Transformation of Rhetoric', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vol. 5: Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.198.

¹¹⁶ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, Halle: 1735.

nature, creation or, perhaps, Being. The universe exists as an organic whole, as a macrocosm and as a microcosm, as chaos and as order, as thought and as matter, and every perception, thought and event is always experienced and described at some specific, chosen point of balance, that both separates or distinguishes, and unifies or constructs. We all do this, and most self-consciously, the poet does this, not because, as Kant might say, our minds work like this and we cannot avoid trying to impose order on what is around us, but because we are part of the far bigger and imperfectly comprehended divine order, which we cannot resist, and with which we can only conform.¹¹⁷ Kant believed that we attributed natural purposes to organisms by analogy with our personal inner experience as human beings.¹¹⁸ For Hölderlin, however, there was no reason for us to be the starting point for knowledge about nature. Since we have the same relation to Being as any other natural object, event or process, our human intellectual powers have been determined simultaneously with and work in harmony with nature.

In general terms, Hölderlin's work confirms that the more dynamic view of human nature used by Schiller, in opposition to the Kantian account of the faculties, has become accepted. Not simply his view of human nature, but his philosophy as a whole expresses notions of change, re-adjustment and points of stable or temporary equilibrium, which apply equally to his aesthetic position. Like Kant, Hölderlin regards the perception of beauty as the main aim of aesthetics. Like Schiller, he has an educational aim in promoting the perception of beauty. However, because of the degree to which the philosophy and the aesthetics are interdependent and

¹¹⁷ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism 1781–1801*, Cambridge MA; London, Harvard University Press, 2002, p.406.

J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Texte zur Theorie der Tragödie: Die tragische Ode...', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.80.

¹¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §61, 5:360, p.234.

intermingled, to perceive beauty, in Hölderlin's terms, is also to perceive the truth about the world and our place in it. Poetic truth, which is to say, the truth we find in poetry or literature, does not have to be identical with what we would normally regard as literal truth. As we have seen, it could be error, but used in the right way. Added to this is the cultural dimension, whereby our personal historical situation affects the way in which we respond to the literature of a past age. The total effect of this is to suggest that, in, as it were, opening our eyes to beauty, art is offering us a new interpretation of the world around us, of which we were previously unaware; it is conveying a universal truth to us in language to which we as individuals can relate. While Hölderlin himself may have seen this as the search for beauty, it seems just as plausible to see it as a search for meaning. Like the children who cannot help putting things in their mouths, who act in *Hyperion* as an analogy for the rational foundationalists' search for system,¹¹⁹ humans cannot help seeking meaning. This is a considerable shift from the classical view of aesthetics as a self-contained area of study, mainly relevant to the fine arts enjoyed by a sensitive, leisured élite. It is also a view that comes through even more clearly in the following chapters, as we discuss the work of Friedrich Schlegel.

¹¹⁹ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Vorstufen und späte Fragmente: Entwürfe zur endgültigen Fassung', in (ed.) Michael Knaupp, *Erläuterungen und Dokumente: Friedrich Hölderlin, »Hyperion«*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.196.

SECTION 3: FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL

CHAPTER 10

FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL, THE ANCIENTS AND THE MODERNS

Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie,¹ often referred to as the ‘Studium-Aufsatz’, is a good starting point for considering Schlegel’s relationship with his classicist predecessors, his relationship with Schiller’s work, and his subsequent thoughts on aesthetics and literary theory. Schlegel admired Schiller’s work on aesthetics, though he was not personally on good terms with him. Hölderlin and Schlegel were acquainted, mainly through their mutual friend, Schelling, but were never friendly. Nevertheless, they had a similar philosophical background, beginning with Kant, then influenced by and re-evaluating Fichte. Schlegel was also affected in the latter half of the decade by the revived interest in Plato and Spinoza. He had two main projects during those years. One was to write a theoretical history of classical literature; the *Studium-Aufsatz*, which is discussed in this chapter, was a step towards this subsequently revised aim. The second project was to break down the interdisciplinary barriers created by the rapid advances in scientific and technical research in German academia. In philosophy and literature, for example, he envisaged a union between literature and philosophy that he called *Symphilosophie*. The best literature would be philosophical, and the best philosophy would be expressed directly through literature and myth. Furthermore, in all disciplines, co-operation and group-authorship should become the norm.

Our discussion in chapters 11 and 12, relating to some of the *Charakteristiken* and *Fragmente* published in the *Lyceum* and the *Athenäum* between 1797 and 1800,

¹‘Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie’ (hereafter referred to as *Studium-Aufsatz*), in (Ed.) Ernst Behler, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, vol.1: Studien des klassischen Altertums, Paderborn; Munich; Vienna: Schöningh, 1979, p.205-367. Abbreviated as *KFSA*.

The essay was written in 1795 and published after some delay.

touches on this second project. In our overall assessment of Schlegel's work, however, these two aims, will not seem so important. In aesthetics, Schlegel's most important contribution was his effectively having defined the Romantic movement, and given artists and writers a new, non-classical way of approaching and assessing their task and their completed product. Despite what he hoped, the 'Sym...' disciplines never became established, and academic specialisation probably proceeded even more rapidly as the nineteenth century continued. Indeed, his own work led to the rise of two new disciplines, which constituted further specialisation in themselves: namely, literary criticism and the hermeneutic tradition in philosophy. These can probably be regarded as his greatest contributions to academic thought, and also as the natural endpoint of the narrative of this thesis.

In the present chapter, we examine the *Studium-Aufsatz*, an early work, which, we shall see, contributes a great deal to our understanding of Schlegel's later writing. In chapter 11 we examine the critical essays, especially *Über Lessing*, which illustrates how Schlegel's view of literature developed. *Über Lessing* begins to apply the concepts of what came to be regarded as Romantic criticism. Chapter 12 then highlights how the journals, *Lyceum* and *Athenäum*, expressed and extended these concepts in a new terminology. The *Studium-Aufsatz* has been regarded variously as a continuation of the long-running Herder / Winckelmann debate on the importance for eighteenth century artists of using classical models,² or, by contrast, as a decisive break with that inconclusive controversy.³ In relation to the work of Schiller, the essay has been viewed variously as a youthful effort, frustratingly upstaged and

² Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.21.

³ Raimund Belgardt, '»Romantische Poesie« in Friedrich Schlegels Aufsatz „Über das Studium der griechische Poesie“, in *The German Quarterly*, vo. 40, no.2, Mar. 1967.

overtaken by *Naïve and Sentimental*,⁴ or as a piece of work derived from Schiller's essays, despite Schlegel's best endeavours at independent thought,⁵ or, finally, as a significant, independent work. According to this last view, it went beyond an understanding of Kant's writings, and tried to develop a more Fichtean position⁶ to take literature and the theory of art onwards beyond Schiller, and thus enable the new departures associated with Romanticism.⁷

It examines the condition of contemporary literature in relation to the classical world, and is interesting and potentially progressive for three reasons. Firstly, although it may remind us in some respects, not only of *Naïve and Sentimental* but also of the *Aesthetic Letters*,⁸ it develops and relies more heavily on Fichtean arguments than Schiller did; secondly it emphasises historical arguments. Schiller only briefly introduced a historical perspective and barely linked it to the main philosophical arguments.⁹ Eichner dismisses this element in Schlegel as merely repeating Herder's historical account of cultural origins.¹⁰ However, although he appreciated the classical writers enough to assess how far a literary output might emerge from, respond to and also affect its particular cultural environment, Schlegel

⁴ Josef Körner, *Romantiker und Klassiker: Die Brüder Schlegel in ihren Beziehungen zu Schiller und Goethe*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971, p.32.

⁵ (Ed.) Hans Eichner, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, vol.2: Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796 - 1801), Paderborn; Munich; Vienna: Schöninghshausen, 1967, 'Einleitung', p.XI.

⁶ This point is expressed in a quotation from Schlegel's contemporary, Wilhelm von Humboldt, in (Ed.) Ernst Behler, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, vol.1: Studien des klassischen Altertums, Paderborn; Munich; Vienna: Schöninghshausen, 1979, 'Einleitung', p.CLXVI.

⁷ Two examples of writers who have taken this view:

Andreas Huyssen, 'Nachwort', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.234.

A.O. Lovejoy, 'On the Meaning of "Romantic" in Early German Romanticism, Part II', in *Modern Language Notes*, Vol.32, No.2, Feb 1917.

⁸ Eichner claims that Schlegel's wording also echoes Goethe, writing on the subject of ancient poetry.

Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.17.

⁹ See chapter 3 above.

¹⁰ Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.25.

takes some pains to integrate historical analysis with the Fichtean philosophy, thus attempting to give a simultaneously empirical and *a priori* account of cultural and literary change. Finally, the opening chapters of the *Studium-Aufsatz* express the ideas that, with some adaptation, became his theory of Romantic literature, as he criticises the degenerate state of modern literature. The fact that Schlegel later re-evaluated the literary tendency of his age should not be surprising. His version of Early Romanticism came to view ambiguity and ambivalence as essential to any artistic and creative response.

In the light of these general comments, I shall discuss the first two and the last chapters, which seem most relevant both to Schiller and the later development of Schlegel's own work. The essay opens with a discussion of themes familiar from the *Aesthetic Letters*, deploring the sad condition of modern art, describing emptiness, lack of education or abuse of education, and the capricious pursuit of novelty in the name of fashion.¹¹ Most modern artistic works, he says, are unsatisfying. Rather than peaceful enjoyment, they exhibit unsatisfied yearning, and encourage this response in an undiscerning public.¹² Artists, flattered by public attention, are not averse to keeping pace with the constant shifting of trivial tastes.¹³ Schlegel admits some talented poets are at work in modern times, but also believes they have abandoned any pursuit of the beautiful. Truth or morality often seem to be their goals,¹⁴ and if we try to analyse either what the public is looking for, or what the best artists are trying to

¹¹ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.218.

¹² *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.219.

¹³ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.220.

¹⁴ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.218.

produce, we shall find a variety of criteria, but never that of beauty. Indeed, some of their most excellent works are obviously representations of the ugly.¹⁵

All this, according to Schlegel, is symptomatic of a general state of artistic anarchy. Traditionally essential distinctions are now disturbingly blurred. The boundaries between knowledge and art, truth and beauty, philosophy and literature, poetry and history are breaking down. The domination of fashion has reduced notions of public morality and taste to a travesty.¹⁶ In such circumstances no appeal to public standards of taste or morality can be made if we are trying to reach any level of aesthetic understanding. Already we see the impossibility of sustaining a classical Enlightenment evaluation of art. On one hand, complete submission to a set of foolish and arbitrary rules has been demanded; on the other, art has sought an artificial lawlessness, as '*sie vergötterte in mystischen Orakelsprüchen das Genie...*'.¹⁷ Hopes of being able to create art on the basis of any fundamental principle have been disappointed so often, that neither public nor artist gives any credence to theories of art; hence, the popular conclusion that correctness of taste and beauty in art rest on coincidence, or chance.¹⁸ Anyone who does anything original is immediately and relentlessly copied by inferior people, so that even this work eventually becomes banal, and is forgotten or rejected. Whereas in other nations the results of this disorganised activity are a one-sided masquerade of their national character, equally ridiculously, Germany has become a kind of display cabinet for specimens from around the world. The Germans are frantic to accumulate content, so folk literature

¹⁵ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.219.

¹⁶ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.219.

¹⁷ It (ie. art) idolised the mystic oracular pronouncements of genius.

¹⁸ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.221.

jostles for attention alongside affected, genteel poetic styles.¹⁹ Schlegel enumerates various other grotesque artistic styles current in Germany, including '*Nationalpoesie für die Dilettanten der Deutschheit*'.²⁰ Yet even from among this plethora of styles, nothing satisfactory emerges. The drive to create art is weakening, subsiding into slack passivity - just the kind of danger Schiller, too, foresaw for German society in general. The public appetite is crude; good taste is gradually dying out, and will soon disappear in the unsatisfied yearning and inconsolable despair expressed in poetic composition.²¹

Perhaps this brief English summary of the opening paragraphs of Schlegel's essay captures something of its tone. This is a polemical work. Schlegel expresses passion, anger, despair, but, most importantly for his subsequent work, he writes with a powerful authorial voice that communicates his dry, ironic humour. The whole essay seems intended to mimic a conversation in which Schlegel and the reader are complicit. The reader is expected to share Schlegel's outrage and despair, and also to have the good taste to smile knowingly at the ridiculous excesses that he covertly and flatteringly implies are only too obvious to everyone. 'Good taste' itself, of course, no longer exists, according to Schlegel. So here is early evidence of one of his favourite argumentational techniques. In this essay he will subsequently salvage a conclusion from the wreckage, not only of '*die Bruchstücke der zerschmetterten Kunst*',²² but

¹⁹ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.222.

The comment about accumulating content recalls Schiller's historical account of the development of the aesthetic mode of perception in the *Aesthetic Letters*. The accumulation of content was identified as the savage's first step towards the recognition of beauty. This reinforces our impression that Schlegel had a low opinion of standards of taste in contemporary Germany.

²⁰ A proud national poetry for dabblers in Germanity.

There are many instances, visible from the footnotes in KFSa that document the textual revisions of this essay, showing how carefully Schlegel decided whether to use terms of German or French origin. He consistently used the French option to underscore his ironical - even sarcastic - intentions.

²¹ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.223.

²² *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.224.

also from his own apparently iconoclastic starting point; he will show us where art should be tending, and, thus, what good taste really requires. The skilful execution of the technique we have just described constitutes the ambiguous beauty he identified and elevated later in the decade as irony. Whatever the similarities in subject matter, it has to be said that Schlegel's calculated lightness of touch in these opening paragraphs exceeds anything in Schiller's far more earnest, though equally strongly felt, theoretical works. It is as if Schlegel is putting Schiller's advocacy of the balanced combination of the drives into action, and exemplifying in his own critique the operation of a play drive that works to serious effect.

Schlegel then explains how the current situation developed from the origins of European art and art theory, and also applies the interacting forces of Fichteian philosophy to the facts of mankind's history, showing that European art, as he sees it, grew from the interaction between the Fichteian model of humanity, and the dominant European environment. Eighteenth century European art and other changes and upheavals in contemporary European culture then represent a critical point in human development, so that, if we can analyse the fundamentals of the situation correctly, we shall be able to guide the creative arts through the current difficulties to a foreseeable stage of resolution and improvement. The words in which he sums up the current condition of art, and prefaces his arguments for regeneration, recall a theme of Hölderlin's:

Man könnte sie ein Chaos alles Erhabenen, Schönen und Reizenden nennen, welches gleich dem alten Chaos, aus dem sich, wie die Sage lehrt, die Welt ordnete, eine Liebe und einen Haß erwartet, um die verschiedenartigen Bestandteile zu scheiden, die gleichartigen aber zu vereinigen.²³

the fragments of shattered Art

²³*Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.224.

It could be called a *chaos* of everything sublime, beautiful and attractive, which, like the ancient chaos from which myth teaches us the world took its order, is awaiting a *love* and a *hatred* that would separate all the diverse components, but unite those of a similar type.

Schlegel is in general less inclined than Hölderlin to draw on mythical imagery to illustrate his point, but this example shows how the two writers were exposed to the same range of literary, religious and philosophical influences. However, they interpreted them slightly differently. There is an irony in this quotation that might conceivably not have been lost on Schlegel himself in his later years. Hölderlin never hesitated to perceive and embrace the beauty of 'Chaos', as he called it in his later poems.²⁴ However, here Schlegel refers to Chaos negatively, to reinforce his criticism of the contemporary art world. The only optimistic note is the presentiment that the condition of Chaos is not permanent, but destined to resolve itself into a new era of artistic beauty, as it has done before. The slightly later Schlegel, however, achieved his own sense of resolution by recognising the beauty supposedly inherent in confusion and in discontinuous structures.²⁵ The future Schlegel did not deny these various features and trends, but he re-evaluated them.

The essay's shift from criticism to reconstruction is based on an expectation of '*glückliche Katastrophe*' and the '*entscheidende Augenblick*'. The western world has reached a point of crisis beyond which it must either always continue to sink, or necessarily progress, using '*ein[en] Leitfaden*' - a guiding thread - from the spirit of

²⁴ See: 'Das Schicksal' (1793/94), 'Diotima – mittlere Fassung' (1796), 'Heimkunft: An die Verwandten' (1801), in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Die Gedichte: Sämtliche Gedichte und »Hyperion«*, (ed.) Jochen Schmidt, Frankfurt am Main; Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2001, pp.157, 177, and 291.

²⁵ By the time of: Friedrich Schlegel, 'Gespräch über die Poesie: Rede über die Mythologie', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.191, written in 1800, Schlegel has clearly changed his mind about chaos. He writes:

Aber die höchste Schönheit, ja die höchste Ordnung ist denn doch nur die des Chaos... welches nur auf die Berührung der Liebe wartet, um sich zu einer harmonischen Welt zu entfalten...

But the highest beauty, indeed the highest degree of order, is nevertheless that of chaos... which only awaits the touch of love to unfold into a harmonious world.

The similarity between this sentiment and Hölderlin is quite striking.

Schlegel's increased interest in discontinuous structures was visible by 1797. His calculated development of the Fragments, published in *Lyceum* and *Athenäum* illustrate this.

See chapter 12 below.

its own past history, to lead it forwards.²⁶ To us as readers this posed dichotomy might seem to be an entirely open question. Will western art continue to sink? Or will it progress? Schlegel considers it obvious that matters will progress and improve.

Only later did he elaborate on the faith he expresses here that

schon oft erzeugte ein dringendes Bedürfnis seinen Gegenstand; aus der Verzweiflung ging eine neue Ruhe hervor.²⁷

This, then, is probably an early indication that he was beginning to form a notion of some sort of dialectical process on which he could base a theory of history.

Schon der durchgängige *gegenseitige Einfluß* der moderne Poesie deutet auf innern Zusammenhang.²⁸

reinforces this supposition. Schiller believed that forces united within the will of man could produce an artistic synthesis greater than themselves, but thinks only of beauty in art and the balanced human being.²⁹ Schlegel, however, suggests more generally that, precisely because we can distinguish two opposite tendencies working on each other, a covert, unified process must be at work.

Working from this presupposition, he can then discuss European art. There is, in fact, a shared European culture, an unusual thought at a time when Europe was comparatively unaware of the importance or even the existence of other human cultures around the world. In analytical terms, it is also a surprise, of the kind readers will come to associate with Schlegel. He has just established that there is fragmentation among the artistic practices of the European nations. If, however, any perceptive readers were already suspecting that Schlegel would suggest some remedy

²⁶ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.224.

a fortunate catastrophe / turning point and a decisive moment.

²⁷ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.224:

We have often seen how a pressing need has begotten its own object; from despair arose a new calm.

²⁸ The continuous *reciprocal influence* of modern poetry already points to inner cohesion.

Studium-Aufsatz op. cit. p.226.

²⁹ See chapter 4 above.

for the current situation, they might be expecting any such proposed resolution to rescue art either absolutely, as art *per se*, or universally, in a worldwide sense.

Schlegel states, however,

Es ist wahr, bei aller Eigentümlichkeit und Verschiedenheit der einzelnen Nationen verrät das Europäische Völkersystem dennoch durch einen auffallend ähnlichen Geist der Sprache, der Verfassung, Gebräuche und Einrichtungen, in vielen übrig gebliebenen Spuren der früheren Zeit, den gleichartigen und gemeinschaftlichen Ursprung ihrer Kultur.³⁰

He thus dissociates himself from strident nationalistic or factional schools of thought, but also abandons any Kantian, universally valid answer to questions about the nature or purpose of art, beauty and any associated concepts. Though diverse, the various golden ages of the European national '*Poesien*' have inner interconnections that unite them.³¹ He enumerates their shared characteristics: imitation of the ancients; the gulf, envy and antagonism between popular and 'high' artistic culture; an excess *des Charakteristischen, Individuellen und Interessanten* - egocentric, quirky individualism; and the restless, insatiable pursuit of novelty, *dem Piquanten* (the spicy or suggestive) and *dem Frappanten* (the striking) - which is to say, sensationalism in general, expressed tellingly enough, in a French lexis.³² All the national failings combine with these common traits to indicate that what has happened to modern *Poesie* makes sense only if they are aspects of a pan-European whole, and not a

³⁰ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.225 (Schlegel's spelling used in quotation):

It is true, in all the peculiarity and variety of individual nations the system of European peoples betrays nevertheless the kindred and communal origin of its culture in many leftover traces of former times, through a strikingly similar spirit in language, constitution, customs and organisation.

³¹ These 'golden ages' are referred to in a more overtly disparaging way in Friedrich Schlegel, 'Gespräch über die Poesie: Epochen der Dichtkunst' (1800), in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.183.

The emphasis there is on their derivation from and inferiority to classical Greek *Vorbilder* and the work of Petrarch and Dante.

³² *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.227.

collection of unrelated national groupings,³³ and that the similarities become more pronounced once we examine art's origins and goals.

Fichtean ideas then become more discernible. In humanity, there can be no such thing as a pure power at work. Mankind is always resident in a particular world, and even the apparently undetermined concepts associated with the expressions 'culture' (*Kultur*), 'development' (*Entwicklung*) and 'education' (*Bildung*) presuppose two separate natures - one which is being cultivated, and another that brings about the cultivation and modifies, advances and limits by means of external conditions and circumstances. Activity itself unavoidably forms and educates mankind, meaning that this education, according to Schlegel the very content of human life, is the true object of history at a higher level. History is the attempt to discover the necessary in the changeable. The internal duality in mankind also means that, from the first moment of our existence, we find ourselves involved in a scuffle (*handgemein*) with fate. Life is a constant life or death battle with this terrifying, unavoidable power.³⁴ This is a rather more figurative expression of Fichte's analysis of how the *Ich* and *Nicht-Ich* within the self create and re-create the human self, and furthermore, how human knowledge of the world, its existence and nature are derived from this constant feeling, challenging and modification of the resistance experienced during activity. Schlegel develops the imagery further in the following pages.

...sogar im Mittelpunkte seines eignen Wesens hat sein Feind - die ihm entgegengesetzte Natur - noch Wurzel gefaßt... eine zweideutige Mischung der Gottheit und der Tierheit.³⁵

³³ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.228.

³⁴ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.229.

³⁵ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.230.

...even in the very centre of his own being, his enemy - the natural world that is opposed to him - has taken root... an ambiguous mixture of divinity and animal nature.

We are engaged in the problem of how to resolve this and reconcile these insoluble inner contradictions.

Schlegel then offers us his solution to this puzzle. It resembles both Schiller's and Hölderlin's solutions. For Schiller the aesthetically educated human being achieved a balance between sensuous and rational drives. Hölderlin urged us to embrace fate, ie. the physical, resistant aspects of ourselves and the world around us, and make them our own. What Schlegel writes reminds us of both approaches:

Nur das Gemüt, welches von dem Schicksal hinlänglich durchgearbeitet worden ist, erreicht das seltne Glück, selbstständig sein zu können. Die Grundlage seiner stolzesten Werke ist oft ein bloßes Geschenk der Natur, und auch seine beste Taten sind nicht selten kaum zur Hälfte sein. Ohne alle Freiheit wäre es keine Tat: ohne alle fremde Hülfe keine menschliche.³⁶

Unless we were free, there would be no act, but without outside help, there would be no human act. Education is the end result of a reciprocal interaction between freedom and nature, and between these two there is a constant reciprocal determination. Human autonomy is hard won, the result of a struggle with fate and nature. Education or freedom are the final result of every reciprocal interaction (*Wechselwirkung*) between freedom and nature.

Schlegel has thus set up a model of mankind. Just as the components of Kant's theory require the application of the schemata in order to be understood as knowledge; just as Schiller's human being can be called such only if the abstract, or unconditioned *Person* exists in time and space, so Schlegel also denies the possibility of any pure, unconditioned human being, because the unconditioned aspect of humanity must be allied with an inner animal nature, and can operate only as an aspect of nature, influenced by its surroundings. Like Schiller, Schlegel accepts also

³⁶*Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.230.

Only the mind that has been sufficiently worked through by fate can achieve the rare good fortune of being capable of autonomy. The foundation of its proudest creations is often a mere gift of nature, and it is not unusual even for its best deeds to be hardly half its own. Without any freedom there would be no deed at all: without any external help no human deed.

that, united though they are, these aspects of humanity are nevertheless distinguishable, running like threads or themes through all human activity. Sometimes, like Schiller, Schlegel even calls them 'drives'; he writes of the understanding (*Verstand*), which he opposes to the '*blinde Kraft*' (blind force) of inclination (*Neigung*). Schlegel, however, presents a slightly more jaded view of human intentionality, or perhaps, more Humean view.

Dort ist der Verstand auch bei der größten Ausbildung höchstens nur der Handlanger und Dolmetscher der Neigung; der ganze zusammengesetzte Trieb aber der unumschränkte Gesetzgeber und Führer der Bildung.³⁷

Thus, although the integrated human being is capable of autonomous thought and action, inclination, or the natural animal side of mankind, is the motive force. Schiller indeed presumed people had begun as primitive creatures who knew nothing but nature, but he did not credit nature with the initiating rôle in what we do. Schlegel's image is of an understanding that guides, develops and improves a basically natural activity. Viewing the relationship between the inner facets of humanity in this way makes it easier for Schlegel to explain historical and cultural developments. Thus, without reason, mankind would not have remained static, but his behaviour would have been random and erratic. Reason and the understanding give shape and direction to human activity and, in the case of the arts, enable a more critical handling of the material with which the human animal would in any case have engaged in some way. Of nature, Schlegel writes: *der Trieb ist zwar ein mächtiger Beweger, aber ein blinder Führer*.³⁸ Thus, historically, concepts directed aesthetic development. They have been the guiding principles, even though the strength and content of the process may have

³⁷ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.231.

There the understanding, even in its most highly educated form, is only the dogsbody and interpreter of inclination; the complete composite drive, however, is the unlimited lawgiver and leader of the educational process.

³⁸ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.231.

The drive is admittedly a powerful mover, but a blind leader.

been given by nature.³⁹ And they have also developed strength and influence in response to their environment.

In the following pages Schlegel illustrates how this is so in the history of art and literature. The Europeans descended from barbarian invaders, and their culture is rooted in this barbarism. They inherited the remnants of classical culture, but lacked the intellect necessary for developing and improving the classical model. The immature understanding looked urgently for a ready-made given object on which to work.⁴⁰ Hence the ubiquitous and recurrent tendency to imitate the artists of antiquity springs from this deep-seated feature in the origins of European culture.⁴¹ And, as can be imagined, the results during the past one-and-a-half thousand years reflect just about every misconception society could have of a past civilisation.⁴² At this point a comment casts light on Schlegel's later interest in producing literary fragments. Criticising the cavalier way in which modern writers throw together profuse selections of material and subjects, Schlegel objects, not to diversity of content, but that the resulting work lacks inner life or cohesion of its own. The external force of the work's artificial structure holds it together, not the presence of any living principle.⁴³ Whereas some of Schlegel's strictures in this essay may be opinions that he later reversed, he adhered to this fundamental principle, even after re-evaluating his search for objective beauty. For instance, his ensuing discussion of Shakespeare considers how writers and musicians have experimented by blurring the boundaries among literary genres. In general, he condemns this, but Shakespeare, both in *Romeo*

³⁹ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.232.

⁴⁰ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.237.

⁴¹ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.238.

⁴² Schlegel picks up this idea of cultural distortion again with reference to the various possible ways of reading Lessing. See chapter 11 below.

⁴³ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.238.

and Juliet and in *Hamlet* is exculpated, in two different ways, from accusations of having created disorganised, disjointed works. Shakespeare achieves unity in *Romeo and Juliet*, an enchanting mix of elegy and lyricism, not by any rationally analysable or comprehensible method. We feel its unity. We feel the whole play as an extended sigh, sweet anguish, painful enjoyment and interwoven grace and pain.⁴⁴ By 1798, Schlegel was unequivocally praising Shakespeare's Romantic qualities and the systematic skill with which he interweaves so many features into a single, Romantic drama. Shakespeare was helping to set standards, and no longer needed any exceptional defence.⁴⁵

Hamlet too relies, not on the crude or forced application of a rule-governed, unsuitable structure, but by such a simple expedient, that it often passes unnoticed, especially by its imitators. That expedient is the life of Shakespeare's main character, Hamlet, the central point of the play. He generates its events, and is the focus of the action.⁴⁶ *Hamlet* is not like the old aesthetic tragedies, but is a philosophical drama with a didactic purpose, an example of the blurred boundaries between drama and philosophy; it has an idealist (*idealistisch*) and philosophically interesting intention. Hamlet himself represents disharmony. He exhibits a complete excess of the understanding over active, physical power. Overall this tragedy leaves us with an impression of the deepest despair. Shakespeare portrays mankind as being forever separated from and at odds with fate.

In a long footnote, interposed between his references to *Romeo and Juliet* and his longer discussion of *Hamlet*, Schlegel suggests how to reconcile these two sets of

⁴⁴ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.241.

⁴⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Athenäums-Fragmente, no.253', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.108.

⁴⁶ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.247.

observations.⁴⁷ Artistic representation is unlike scientific representation in that the subject matter of science is seldom chosen, never formed and never invented. This means, says Schlegel, that science is not *idealisches*, thus meaning that it does not derive from ideas in the writer's mind, whether as abstract ideas or imaginative scenarios and characterisations. Similarly, his next sentence implies another contrast between science and art:

Die darstellende Kunst teilt sich in drei Klassen, je nachdem ihr Ziel das Wahre, das Schöne oder das Gute ist.⁴⁸

Representational art thus represents, not true things, in the manner, for example, of scientific, botanical illustrations, but the ideas of the truth, beauty and the good. The aesthetic work exhibits beautiful free play, which sounds very much like an acceptance of Kant's theory, unchanged. Schlegel's view of the moral work, depicting the good, however, acknowledges a debt to Hemsterhuys, who identified a kind of philosophy that he called 'dithyrambic'. The dithyramb was the unstructured, ecstatic musical and poetical form of ancient Dionysian celebration, and Schlegel sees the work of some of the most famous German poets as being like this.

Was versteht er [d.h. Hemsterhuys] darunter wohl andres, als den freiesten Erguß des sittlichen Gefühls, eine Mitteilung großer und guter Gesinnungen?⁴⁹

To Schlegel this means that the kind of modern *Poesie* that is moral in its tendency is neither didactic, nor dramatic, but dithyrambic in its overall composition.

It might now be useful to insert some comments about the subsequent direction taken by Schlegel's thoughts on artistic merit, that arise because of his view

⁴⁷ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.244.

⁴⁸ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit.. p.243

Representational art falls into *three classes*, according to whether its goal is the true, the beautiful or the good.

⁴⁹ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.244.

What else could he [ie. Hemsterhuys] mean by this, but the freest outpouring of moral feeling, a way of imparting great and good dispositions?

of Shakespeare in the *Studium-Aufsatz*. Schiller's *Naïve and Sentimental* did not appear until just after Schlegel had written this essay. Both men held Shakespeare in high regard, and clearly intended that any literary aesthetics must be capable of recognising Shakespeare's greatness.⁵⁰ They treat Shakespeare differently, however. For Schiller he was essentially naïve, though writing in and influenced by a sentimental cultural environment. Shakespeare reflected life realistically and simply, as it was. To judge from what the *Studium-Aufsatz* tells us, however, Schlegel disagreed with this. His evaluation of Shakespeare shows him using all kinds of features, specially chosen for his specific, and sometimes moral or philosophical purposes, that enabled him to establish his own standards of artistic excellence. In the language of *Naïve and Sentimental*, this would amount to a claim that Shakespeare was a sentimental writer. Thus, although, as some commentators have claimed, *Naïve and Sentimental* might have prompted Schlegel to take his ideas on literary aesthetics further, and might also have helped determine the direction taken by these ideas to some extent, in the case of Shakespeare, reading *Naïve and Sentimental*, perhaps led Schlegel to recognise the redundancy of arguing any special case for Shakespeare's greatness, as he had done in the *Studium-Aufsatz*. Shakespeare fitted the definition of a sentimental writer well, on Schlegel's estimation, regardless of how Schiller had classified him.

Despite his criticisms of modern literature and thought, as if they might be incapable of being accommodated in any coherent theory, the passages we have already discussed from the *Studium-Aufsatz* suggest that Schlegel is already establishing a new framework for assessing the merit of literary work. Works must be judged, at least partly, on the basis of their creator's intentions, insofar as they are

⁵⁰ For Schiller's view of Shakespeare, see chapter 5 above.

revealed in the work.⁵¹ Thus, any attempt to interpret Shakespeare's plays as things of beauty will fail. They are aesthetic, emotional or philosophical in their approach, depending on the playwright's intended end. *Romeo and Juliet* shares some of the characteristics of the moral drama. It is an unconstrained outpouring of feeling that tells us how the freshest blooms of life's Springtime shrivel in the unkind breath of fate,⁵² which surely carries a moral message. *Hamlet*, however, is not based on emotion, and appeals not just to the understanding, but the reason as a whole.⁵³ As Schlegel has told us, it relies for its unity almost entirely on the words and thoughts of an excessively rational, though disharmonious, central character.

Shakespeare thus exemplifies and is the pinnacle of modern *Poesie*. He has been criticised by mediocre writers for breaking the rules of art. But since, as Schlegel believes he has shown already, no objective theory exists as yet, this criticism is premature. Both Nature and Shakespeare create a profusion of both the beautiful and the ugly.⁵⁴ He uses ugliness to explore a moral vacuum when necessary. This is how he is able to develop his characters and portray a view of life. He is interesting and individual, not beautiful, and makes no attempt to present a balanced picture. He is prepared to leave both his characters and his audience in a state of confusion at the end of a work, if he considers this necessary to his purpose.

Now, whatever Schlegel's later views on the nature and purpose of art or literature, he has already deviated from Kant and Schiller, even at this stage of the *Studium-Aufsatz*. They provided for the possibility of art seeking firstly, either to be or to portray the beautiful, or secondly to be or to portray the sublime. Schiller is quite

⁵¹ Later, Schlegel doubted whether it was possible to identify an author's intentions fully, or for an author to convey his or her intention fully. See Chapter 11 below.

⁵² *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.241.

⁵³ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.246.

⁵⁴ *Studium-Aufsatz* op. cit. p.250.

explicit in the *Aesthetic Letters* that the aesthetic drive is a balance between form drive and material drive, that the aesthetically capable human being exists in such a condition, and that excellent art itself demands a balance between form and material, if it is to be appreciated. Schlegel's conclusion from his survey of modern art resembles Schiller's to the extent that there are indeed various different ways in which or levels at which the human and the material, the subjective and the objective factors might perhaps be brought into a reciprocal interaction. However, in addition, he concludes that these ways are so varied, that they cannot simply be categorised as ways of creating artistic beauty. These opening pages of the *Studium-Aufsatz* broaden the possible purposes of art. We have noted that Schlegel specifically mentions truth, beauty and morality. He mentions one-sided reliance on either feeling or rationality, on character or on other forms of structure. He mentions the futility of expecting a recognisable external form to provide a coherent structure for a modern work. The key to appreciating the great works of the modern era, he seems to be suggesting, is to identify the source of their inner unity. And this unity, it would appear, rests on a decision made by the creative artist. The artist chooses a goal, a structural focal point, and the work is judged on the terms appropriate to this intention.

In the course of his description of the characteristic, the individual, and the interesting, his apparently bewildered survey of the ugly, the shocking and the chaotic, Schlegel has actually been establishing a range of means by which artists can achieve their chosen ends. These ends might perhaps include the creation of an aesthetically pleasing - or beautiful - artefact, but, equally legitimately, they might not. The artist might, for instance, want to use imaginative means tell us a truth about human nature, however ugly or unpalatable it might be. He might want to create a beautifully structured fairytale that offers the reader closure at its end; but, equally, he

may wish instead to leave the reader with an unresolved moral dilemma to ponder at the end of a moral dithyramb. Schlegel opened these possibilities, but had not yet devised an acceptable model to accommodate his observations.

In the second chapter, '*Weitere Entgegenstellung des Interessanten mit dem Schönen*',⁵⁵ he identifies the interesting as constituting the aesthetic orientation of modern literary art. It is a concept capable of reconciling the apparent conflict between the struggle for individuality and the pressure to imitate. It explains how it is that virtuosity seems to be the prevailing means of validation in artistic circles,⁵⁶ and also explains the general atmosphere of inconclusive striving.⁵⁷ There can be no absolute or highest level of the interesting, yet artists nevertheless strive for something perfect. Having inherited a cultural awareness of classical beauty, artists believe they have to achieve a standard of absolute perfection. Schlegel therefore concludes that the pursuit of the interesting is the misguided means by which modern art hopes to achieve beauty, which can indeed be objective and absolute.⁵⁸ And, having referred to individuals, such as Rembrandt and Goethe in his support,⁵⁹ he optimistically concludes that the shift away from this temporary diversion into the interesting, and back to the beautiful is imminent.

Der Augenblick scheint in der Tat für eine *ästhetischen Revolution* reif zu sein, durch welche das Objektive [in an earlier edition: *Objektive und Schöne*] in der ästhetischen Bildung der Modernen herrschend werden könnte.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.252ff.

Further contrasts between the interesting and the beautiful.

⁵⁶ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.252fn.

⁵⁷ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.253.

⁵⁸ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.257.

⁵⁹ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.261.

⁶⁰ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.269.

In fact, the moment seems to be ripe for an *aesthetic revolution* by means of which an objective standard [in an earlier edition: 'the objective and the beautiful'] could become dominant in the aesthetic education of the moderns.

His objections to the futile way in which writers and the public are being distracted by the individual and changeable remind us of Plato, and his scorn for 'sightseers', who love beautiful things, but cannot see beauty itself.⁶¹ His advocacy of the universally valid, the enduring and the necessary - which together constitute 'the Objective' - reminds us of Plato's exhortations that we should search for knowledge of the Forms. Only the Objective can fill the gap we feel; only beauty can calm our hectic striving. Then comes a shift towards Kant.

Das *Schöne*... ist der allgemeingültige Gegenstand eines uninteressierten Wohlgefallens, welches von dem Zwange des Bedürfnisses und des Gesetzes gleich unabhängig, frei und dennoch notwendig, ganz zwecklos und dennoch unbedingt zweckmäßig ist.⁶²

The ellipsis in this quotation contains Schlegel's admission that the term 'beauty' is still a problematic concept at this stage in his argument, but the rest of the sentence demonstrates the extent to which he accepts Kant's analysis of beauty. Following Schiller, he believes we can actualise or recognise beauty in an objective manifestation, but, like Kant, he knows that it must fulfil some almost paradoxical requirements that set it apart from other areas of human perception. He also expresses some confidence that, ultimately, we shall be able to look back on our past blunderings in the sphere of the interesting, and see that they prepared us for the correct route to aesthetic perfection. If Schlegel later decided that the indeterminacy, constant change and ambivalence of contemporary art was precisely the 'divine breath of irony'⁶³ that constituted its claim to beauty, we can say the *Studium-Aufsatz* shows

⁶¹ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 476b, p.196.

⁶² *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.253.

The *beautiful*... is the universally valid object of a disinterested pleasure that is alike independent of the compulsion of need and of the law, free and yet necessary, completely without purpose, and yet unconditionally purposive.

⁶³'Lyceums-Fragmente, no.42', in (ed.) Hans Eichner, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Vol.2, Part I: Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796 - 1801), Paderborn; Munich; Vienna: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Zürich: Thomas-Verlag, 1967, p.152.

that this change of heart is a complete rejection of Kant. The undetermined interplay between imagination and understanding identified by Kant as creating the judgement of taste, the disinterested sense of pleasure, themselves become compatible, in Schlegel's later work, with a view that art and beauty are themselves paradoxical and shifting. It would seem fair to claim, in this respect, that, although Kant was seeking to ground the stable, classical kind of art, beauty and artistic appreciation he found around him, Schlegel later realised that more than one kind of art or beauty could be simultaneously free of the law and lawful, purposeful but without purpose. In 1795, Schlegel's presumption was still that he was seeking the same kind of beautiful art admired by Kant. Only subsequently did he realise that rapid change and ambiguity might be evidence, not of failed classicism, but an alternative and equally valuable way of doing things.

The third chapter⁶⁴ then examines the standard of beauty portrayed in the art of Ancient Greece, and the fourth considers objections against Greek poetic art,⁶⁵ for instance, that it is rather indelicate by the standards of eighteenth century taste. Thus, even in ancient Greek literature, the perceptive student must distinguish the objective - and thus enduring - features of classical poetry and drama from the local - and thus contextually specific.⁶⁶ This leads him into the final chapter of the essay, '*Von der Wiedergeburt der neuern Poesie*',⁶⁷ in which he reaches his conclusion. Modern

Es gibt alte und moderne Gedichte, die durchgängig im Ganzen und überall den göttlichen Hauch der Ironie atmen.

There are ancient and modern poems that continuously, in general and everywhere, breathe out the divine breath of irony.

⁶⁴ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. pp.276ff. 'Ideal des Schönen in der Griechischen Dichtkunst'. The ideal of beauty in Greek poetry

⁶⁵ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. pp.309ff. 'Einwendungen gegen die Griechische Poesie'. Objections against Greek Poesie [literature].

⁶⁶ eg. *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. pp.338.

⁶⁷ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. pp.330ff. Of the rebirth of more recent *Poesie*

Poesie will be reborn, not when it stops imitating the ancients, and not when it returns to the tradition of imitating classical models, but when it abandons its pursuit of the interesting. Our reading and evaluation of the ancients has been distorted, because we have constantly sought our own idea of the interesting within their texts. We return to Schlegel's point, that not imitation *per se* but the quality of our imitation is at fault.⁶⁸ Once we have thoroughly understood the ancients, we shall identify the objective property of perfect beauty within their work, and ignore whatever was only of relative, passing interest. So long as the interesting is our main criterion for artistic effort, we shall over-value the relative and trivial values of antiquity, just as we do in the modern age.⁶⁹ Thus, although Schlegel's discussion at first seems to perpetuate the more traditional elements of the Winckelmann / Herder controversy, he nevertheless reaches a radical conclusion. By advocating a return to the search for aesthetic truth and beauty, he is not siding with the neo-classical reproducers of classical genres and diction. He indicates a range of writers and styles unsuited to simplistic imitation. He also identifies good practice, writers who recognise and exploit similarities between the rhythms of the Greek and German languages, without forcing German into a classical mould.⁷⁰

Overall, there have been three periods of modern German literature.⁷¹ Firstly, a one-sided national poetry that ignored both aesthetic models and the ancients; secondly, the attempted domination of the artistic world by subjective theory and imitation of the ancients. Schlegel's own artistically anarchic age was still in transition (*die Krise des Übergangs*) between the second and third stages. The third

⁶⁸ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.238.

⁶⁹ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.333.

⁷⁰ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.343.

⁷¹ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.355.

stage will be characterised by objectivity - objective theory, objective imitation, objective art, objective taste. This tendency can be observed, even though we - in the late eighteenth century, at any rate - are only at the start of the third stage.⁷² National *Poesien* still survive and dominate, though partially.

Yet, despite this rather inconclusive trend, Schlegel's optimism remains undimmed. It is the time of the aesthetic revolution; we are ripe for aesthetic education.⁷³ He says this both by analogy with the French Revolution, and for philosophical reasons. Authority and dogma have begun to give way to the critical philosophy (ie. Kantianism), but philosophy is still struggling with scepticism. Kant's *Third Critique*, which Schlegel does not quite refer to by name, marks the beginning of a third period. Now Fichte has revealed the foundations of the critical philosophy we can complete the Kantian philosophy, and establish an objective system of practical and aesthetic science.⁷⁴ In addition, Schlegel thought the Germans had reached a decisive point in studying the Greeks, reading them now in the original, not through the mediation of the Romans. Now artists could apply such knowledge in their own works. Schlegel then offers a kind of counter-argument, suggesting that perhaps great artistic talent occurs randomly. If Nature scatters talent by chance across Europe, familiarity with classical culture is irrelevant. His own reply to this is that our artistic and political environment is not, in any case, encouraging. Everyone should receive a liberal education, and then we can judge the results.

Erst wenn die Gesetzmäßigkeit der ästhetischen Kraft durch eine objektive Grundlage und Richtung gesichert sein wird, kann die ästhetische Bildung

⁷² *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.356.

⁷³ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.356.

⁷⁴ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.358.

though an earlier edition of the essay apparently used the words *festbegründeten Systems der Erkenntnis des Schönen...* rather than *objektiv*.

durch *Freiheit der Kunst* und *Gemeinschaft des Geschmacks* durchgängig durchgreifend und *öffentlich* werden.⁷⁵

Beauty and modern *Poesie* need to become established before we can re-establish the objective generally throughout art. Communication and public discussion among artists should be encouraged. Aesthetics is not a mystery. Schlegel has no time for prickly, hermit-like artists, whom he presumably views as posturing elitists, not generous communicators of beauty. Beauty is not difficult or inaccessible.⁷⁶ This, Schlegel says, was one of the achievements of Bürger, who tried to take art out of the drawing room and study, and into the living world.⁷⁷ Goethe, Wieland, Herder, Schiller are others who have successfully used the Greeks as models.⁷⁸ Schlegel's final comments return to Winckelmann, who remarked on the few in Germany who still know the Greek poets, but Schlegel expects this number to increase. He therefore dedicates his essay to all artists, which is to say, to all who love beauty.⁷⁹

Winckelmann thus effectively has the last word in the *Studium-Aufsatz*, but, despite Eichner's reservations regarding the originality of the essay,⁸⁰ and Lovejoy's attribution of it to Schlegel's 'classical' period,⁸¹ Winckelmann would hardly recognise Schlegel's overall thesis. The long-standing debate about classical models

⁷⁵ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.360.

Only when aesthetic power's conformity to law is safeguarded by an objective basic principle and tendency, can aesthetic education become thoroughly radical and public, by means of the freedom of art and community of taste

⁷⁶ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.361.

He regards them as '*ein Orden ohne Geheimnis*' - a fraternity without any secrets.

Companionability among artists is also recommended in the *Fragmente*. See chapter 12 below.

⁷⁷ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.366.

⁷⁸ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.366.

⁷⁹ *Studium-Aufsatz*, op. cit. p.367.

⁸⁰ Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.17.

As the co-editor of the *KFSA*, Eichner is a very respected commentator on Schlegel. It is, however, quite surprising to note how unsympathetic he often is towards Schlegel's efforts.

⁸¹ A.O. Lovejoy, 'On the Meaning of "Romantic" in Early German Romanticism, Part II', in *Modern Language Notes*, Vol.32, No.2, Feb 1917, p.66.

of literature has virtually been dismissed, although Ancient Greece is the starting point for a sweeping historical account of the development and decline of European culture. Studying history is held up as the best guide to improving contemporary artistic life and production; however, we must interpret history in way unlike anything suggested by the neo-classical tradition. Walzel and Jakobiec are mistaken in thinking Schlegel recommended unconditional imitation of the ancients.⁸² Ancient works are the *Vorbild*, or *Urbild*,⁸³ but, even in the *Studium-Aufsatz*, we are told to reject the formalistic inheritance of genre, ignore the superficial contextual features of the ancient writers, and in some way, cut through into the heart of what they were doing.⁸⁴ In Kantian terms, he is perhaps urging us not to be distracted by the 'craft' elements of artistic creativity, but to appreciate the art that the artist's craft skills only serve to create. The worst feature of the 'interesting' work of Schlegel's contemporaries was that it had no heart. It is not surprising that Schlegel later modified his view of contemporary literature. His criterion of 'heart' later comes through as being similar to the notion of focusing on the spirit, not the letter of the work - an antithesis applied also by Schiller, Fichte and Hölderlin. Schlegel evaluates Lessing (1797), Shakespeare, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1798), and the topics covered in the four sections of the *Gespräch über die Poesie* (1800) in essays that point to the living heart of the writer's work, and value it on that basis. Georg Forster,

⁸² Quoted in Raimund Belgardt, »Romantische Poesie« in Friedrich Schlegels Aufsatz „Über das Studium der griechische Poesie“, in *The German Quarterly*, vo. 40, no.2, Mar. 1967, p. 172.

⁸³ the template or model.

⁸⁴ Schlegel made much the same point in 1800 also. See:

Friedrich Schlegel, 'Gespräch über die Poesie: Versuch über den verschiedenen Styl in Goethes früheren und späteren Werke', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.223.

for example, is forgiven many specifically identified shortcomings on the basis of the life that is evident at the heart of what he writes, and which so fully reveals the man.⁸⁵

Thus, indeed Schlegel later abandoned his opinion about the imminent arrival of an age of objectivity, and celebrated the interesting, the indeterminate and the ironic. As Eichner says, the conclusions of the *Studium-Aufsatz* are drawn at some cost. Schlegel argues rather ingeniously to include both his praise of Hamlet and his condemnation of the modern way. It would have been easier to conclude, as he later did, that Sophocles and Shakespeare had fundamentally different ways of writing, both of which were equally valid, but that Shakespeare was better suited to modern times.⁸⁶ Noteworthy, however, is the fact that Schlegel's general historical analysis survived his revised opinion of the current state of European literature and his changed predictions about the direction that he expected literature to take. He dropped the claim that progress towards objectively perfect beauty was the expected and desired endpoint of historical change, and accepted instead an open-ended developmental process. Yet the adjustment required was minimal, compared to the change he had already recommended, namely, that the excellence of the Greeks must be assessed in the same way as contemporary literary works. Although his colleagues should emulate the ancients, they do so from a new perspective, abandoning prevalent neo-classicist structural guidelines. In fact, this is compatible with his statement:

Man sollte sich nie auf den Geist des Altertums berufen, wie auf eine Autorität. Es ist eine eigene Sache mit den Geistern; sie lassen sich nicht mit Händen greifen, und dem andern vorhalten. Geister zeigen sich nur Geistern. Das Kürzeste und das Bündigste wäre wohl auch hier, den Besitz des alleinseligmachenden Glaubens durch gute Werke zu beweisen.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Georg Forster', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997. p.42.

This point is noted also in Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.34.

⁸⁶ Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.25.

⁸⁷ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Lyceums-Fragment no.44 (1797)', in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Erste Abteilung: Kritische Neuausgabe, Band 2, München, Paderborn, Wien, Zürich 1967, p.152.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Schlegel believed the ancients should be evaluated by the method applicable to all would-be *Poesie*.

The *Third Critique* had prompted Schlegel, like Schiller, to find a theory of literary criticism. Schlegel's objection was that Kant provided no rules for beauty, and thus left the judgement of taste impossible of proof.⁸⁸ At that stage, then, Schlegel shared similar aims to Schiller in his search for the objective criterion, and also thought Fichte had a more fundamental version of the critical philosophy, capable of supporting a theory of history, and thereby justifying Herder. This was what changed. Beiser makes a good case that Schlegel was just as conscious as Schiller of the interdependence of philosophy and literary theory.⁸⁹ Once Schlegel rejected Fichtean foundationalism, in favour of his own open-ended coherentism, however, he no longer expected absolute objectivity in art.⁹⁰ Indeed, it then became easier to accept the apparently chaotic and interesting kinds of literature, and also to account for the desirable characteristics he had recognised.

Thus, Eichner's belief that Schlegel capriciously reversed his position in response to *Naïve and Sentimental* are unjustified. So, too, is the older school of thought that dated Schlegel's change of heart to the publication of Goethe's *Wilhelm*

No one should ever call on the spirit of antiquity as if it were an authority. It is a peculiar thing with spirits; they don't let anyone get hold of them with their hands and hold them out to other people. Spirits only show themselves to spirits. I suppose the shortest and most succinct way here too would be to show forth our allhallowing faith through good works.

⁸⁸ Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.36.

⁸⁹ Frederick Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.123.

He bases his opinion on his study of Schlegel's philosophical notebooks, which have not been used for this project.

⁹⁰ Millán-Zaibert, Elizabeth, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy*, Albany: SUNY Press, 2007, p.161.

Meister.⁹¹ Schlegel's method for analysing modern literature in the *Studium-Aufsatz* was already new, and required only a small later adjustment. The historical ideas in the *Studium-Aufsatz* also had implications. By claiming an interplay between history and philosophy, Schlegel suggested history was not a matter of chance. It exhibits causal connections, and with these also the germ of a dialectical process. Doing this likened history to a science of cultural change, and further, the linkage between societal change and artistic or literary change separated aesthetics from the critical philosophy and re-sited it in what we would now call a sociological context. Once we have established the presence of a sociological force, capable of moulding literature in accordance with the conventional, though fluid, norms of a human grouping, we have lost some of the rigorous objectivity that, in 1795, Schlegel wished to pursue. The Schlegel of the later 1790s, who celebrated innovation and self-consciousness in art, was thus still not in a good position to distinguish between fashion and art. His rejection of false, deadening and misunderstood classical rules led him to emphasise the value of freedom and difference. However, like Schiller, he was not able to replace Kant's judgement of taste, that vital factor that prevents genius from creating original nonsense, with any alternative stable concept or criterion.

By elevating the distinctive identity of European art, comprehensible because of the shared cultural origins of its creators and audience, therefore, Schlegel's account of how and why art has changed or progressed since ancient times led to a

⁹¹ *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* was also published in 1795. However, Schlegel's review of *Wilhelm Meister* appeared in 1798, and is not the first *Charakteristik* to apply a more Romantic assessment of a work. It uses criteria that Belgardt, in particular, traces back very successfully to the *Studium-Aufsatz*.

However, a former orthodox view credited Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* with having changed Schlegel's view of the 'interesting' in literature. See eg. Rudolf Haym, *Die Romantische Schule*, Berlin, 1870. (Referred to in A.O. Lovejoy, 'On the Meaning of "Romantic" in Early German Romanticism, Part II', in *Modern Language Notes*, Vol.32, No.2, Feb 1917, p.71, and in Hans Eichner, 'Friedrich Schlegel's Theory of Romantic Poetry' in *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, vol.71, no.5, Dec. 1956, p.1018.)

John William Scholl, 'Friedrich Schlegel and Goethe, 1790 – 1802: a study in Early German Romanticism', in *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, vol.21, no.1, 1906, p.125.

more relativistic account of aesthetics. In 1795 he may not have appreciated the effect this might have on aesthetics, in fact the Platonic influences on his thought might have led him to a view rather similar to that of Hölderlin, in that, however varied it may be, beauty, as we can understand or appreciate it, is the appearance in our world of an absolute quality, a cultural manifestation of some aspect of an absolute quality or principle.

Schlegel himself was disappointed with the *Studium-Aufsatz*. Eichner thinks it merely systematised the prevailing German attitude towards Greek literature,⁹² and Schlegel's own reactions to the publication of *Naïve and Sentimental* show his disappointment.⁹³ In 1797 he was still uneasy as he recalled the essay:

Mein Versuch über das Studium der griechischen Poesie ist ein manierterter Hymnus in Prosa auf das Objektive in der Poesie. Das Schlechteste daran scheint mir der gänzliche Mangel der unentbehrlichen Ironie; und das Beste, die zuversichtliche Voraussetzung, daß die Poesie unendlich viel wert sei; als ob dies eine ausgemachte Sache wäre.⁹⁴

However, despite Eichner's contentions that Schiller's essay encouraged Schlegel to abandon his demand for objective beauty in art,⁹⁵ the quotation above shows it was lack of irony, rather than his inability to second guess Schiller, that troubled Schlegel

⁹² Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.17.

⁹³ Josef Körner, *Romantiker und Klassiker: Die Brüder Schlegel in ihren Beziehungen zu Schiller und Goethe*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971, p.32.

It is, however, possible that Körner might have over-stated the degree of passion that Schlegel wished to convey in the words he quotes, and also the extent to which those words must have been concealing even deeper strong passions.

⁹⁴ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Lyceums-Fragment no.7', in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Erste Abteilung: Kritische Neuausgabe, Band 2, München, Paderborn, Wien, Zürich 1967, p.147.

My own effort on the study of Greek poetry is an affected prose hymn to objectivity in literature. The worst thing in it seems to me to be its stark lack of any essential irony; and the best is its confident assumption that beautiful literature has infinite value; as if this had already been agreed.

⁹⁵ Eichner confirms that Schlegel had not seen the essay, *Naïve and Sentimental*, until it was published, and was taken aback by its thesis.

Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.27.

In Hans Eichner, 'Friedrich Schlegel's Theory of Romantic Poetry' in *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, vol.71, no.5, Dec. 1956, p.1039, Eichner gave *Naïve and Sentimental* the primary role in causing Schlegel to re-evaluate his position.

in the longer term. Schlegel's readers should not dismiss the essay despite Eichner's comments. The essay is virtually a proto-type for his most successful later form of writing, the *Charakteristik*, or critical essay, itself an ironic form of writing.⁹⁶ I would therefore disagree with Schlegel that his *Studium-Aufsatz* is without irony. Like a *Charakteristik*⁹⁷ the essay identifies inner life as one of the virtues sometimes absent from stilted modern literature. Thus, Schlegel's assessment of literary history is itself an example of irony and capable of contributing to a cultural-historical theory. Some of Schlegel's observations in the *Studium-Aufsatz* continue to hold in his subsequent work, although others were modified or disappeared. We begin to see this in the next chapter, where discussion centres on the *Charakteristiken*.

⁹⁶ Raimund Belgardt, »Romantische Poesie« in Friedrich Schlegels Aufsatz „Über das Studium der griechische Poesie“, in *The German Quarterly*, vo. 40, no.2, Mar. 1967, p. 170.

⁹⁷ In chapter 11 this term will be explained more fully. Schlegel's *Charakteristik*, 'Über Lessing', is discussed in some detail, and reference is made to others.

CHAPTER 11

ÜBER LESSING¹: THE LIGHT THIS ESSAY AND OTHER CHARAKTERISTIKEN THROW ON SCHLEGEL'S THOUGHT

By the time he wrote *Über Lessing*, Schlegel was no longer concerned about objective artistic standards. The essay is a *Charakteristik*, a critical essay that captures the interplay between a writer and his work; the writer as the only kind of person capable of producing a work of this kind, and the work as a revelation of the man who created it.² It claims to counterbalance the uncritical adulation accrued around Lessing, first and greatest writer of the German Nation.³ Schlegel summarises and rejects some of the reasons given for Lessing's greatness, thus presenting himself as a welcome breath of fresh air, re-evaluating Lessing's work unconstrained by the customary inappropriate reverence. Lessing himself always valued independent thought and a relentlessly critical stance,⁴ and the conclusion of Schlegel's opening discussion is that, on the basis of his admirers' evidence, he is not a poet, and his plays are not poetry despite their verse form.⁵

This was not the only occasion on which Schlegel adopted this tactic in assessing a major figure. His *Charakteristik* of Georg Forster concluded that Forster was not a perfect writer.⁶ He detailed Forster's faults, but finally concluded he was great. Forster took the wider view; he valued and expressed the spirit, not the letter, of

¹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, pp.46-75. First published in the *Lyceum*, 1797.

² see also Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.39ff.

³ 'der eigentliche Autor der Nation und des Zeitalters...' Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.46.

⁴ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.58.

⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.60.

⁶ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Georg Forster', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.21.

literature, beauty or his material. Forster always aimed for perfection, but openly acknowledged the impossibility of complete perfection. Doing so actually elevated his literary stature. Therefore Schlegel wanted to reject the methods of past critics, who had wrongly identified both the qualities that genuinely made Lessing and Forster great, and their faults.⁷

Über Lessing eventually concludes that Lessing's play, *Nathan der Weise*, is a work of poetic genius, using the criteria of what Schlegel later called Romantic poetry.⁸ In fact, the purpose of *Über Lessing* may well be to apply Schlegel's own method of critique to Lessing, as a means of illustrating his theory. In other words, he wanted, not to clear away the misleading mystique surrounding Lessing the literary master, but to validate his personal literary theory by demonstrating its relevance to the founder of German literature. Hence, Schlegel is the beneficiary of that mystique, not its destroyer. In that case, the spirit, rather than the word, of the essay contradicts Schlegel's claim that to be a blind devotee of Lessing, the master of candour, is to desecrate his name.⁹ This disingenuousness cannot be held against him, however, since it illustrates his new literary theory. His thought centres around internal tensions and contradictions in the work of art, the ways in which issues and ideas hover indecisively among alternative interpretations, and an implicit, knowing, ironic interaction between writer and reader. The facts firstly, that this apparent attempt to strip Lessing of his iconic status actually confirms it, and secondly that this elevated status confirms the methodology by means of which Lessing has been assessed, are

⁷Contrary to Eichner's belief, Schlegel's line is not ultimately self-defeating, though it is ironic. Since Schlegel intended to demonstrate that his subjects surpassed the standards set by traditional critics, Eichner's objection has no force.

See Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.37.

⁸ See chapter 12 below.

⁹Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.56.

just the kinds of delicious circularities that Schlegel relished, and which typified his Romanticism.¹⁰

From *Über Lessing* various quotations that reflect key themes in Schlegel's theoretical and critical writing will be examined. From these we can generalise, thus explaining his overall aesthetic and philosophical viewpoint. Before examining them, however, one extract is relevant out of sequence. Although Schlegel had a rôle in the development of aesthetic theory from Kant to the end of the eighteenth century, unlike Schiller, he rarely uses the word, 'aesthetic'. Fortunately, *Über Lessing* contains a useful definition:

...eine sehr genialische Erdichtung, deren Zweck und Geist aber dennoch so unpoetisch, oder wie man jetzt in Deutschland sagt, so unästhetisch wie möglich ist.¹¹

So, in Schlegel's vocabulary, *poetisch* means the same as *ästhetisch*. The quotation suggests that he regarded the word 'aesthetic' as an unhelpful neologism.¹² It probably still had strong neo-classical connotations, since Schlegel had seemingly approved aesthetic tragedies in the *Studium-Aufsatz*. Perhaps *ästhetisch* had become too firmly identified with self-indulgent, subjective contemplation in a period of declining classical art, whereas Schlegel favoured practical engagement in direct literary criticism, a kind of poetics, as a better way of establishing the merits of great art. The word, *poetisch*, however, was also new, taken from the word *Poesie*, Schlegel's word for the poetic or aesthetic elements in any art form. *Romantische Poesie* became Schlegel's term for everything the latest European art should be aiming for. From *Über Lessing* we learn that the best writers, eg. Lessing, have

¹⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.446.

¹¹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.72.

¹² He seems to confirm this in *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no. 40.

already been producing *Poesie* in the past, despite the criteria by which they were judged at the time. *Ästhetisch* was perhaps too abstract, too philosophical in the sense of being divorced from practical or sensuous reality, and, furthermore, circumscribed by Kant's usage in the *Third Critique*. Schlegel makes little, if any, use of Kant's philosophical argument. Schlegel's focus is on the nature of Lessing's work and the thought that lies behind it. He is less concerned than Kant with the subjective experience of the man of taste, though he gives the reader an undeniable role in discovering and appreciating Lessing's abilities. *Poetisch* was thus presumably a more helpful word than *ästhetisch* for Schlegel's supposedly worthwhile, substantial task.

He writes about the many-sided character of, in this case, a great man:

Eine so reiche und umfassende Natur kann nicht vielseitig genug betrachtet werden, und ist durchaus *unerschöpflich*. So lange wir noch an Bildung wachsen, besteht ja ein Teil, und gewiß nicht der unwesentlichste, unsers Fortschreitens eben darin, daß wir immer wieder zu den alten Gegenständen, die es wert sind, zurückkehren...¹³

However, Schlegel believed all objects and situations are many-sided, and can be evaluated in many ways. He believed, for instance, that any proposition could be proved in an infinite number of ways, and was suspicious of philosophers who attempted to deduce first principles as foundations for an incontestable philosophical system.¹⁴ In this, he rejected Kant, and the attempts of Reinhold and Fichte to underpin Kant's first principles. He advocated piecemeal coherence as the way of establishing philosophical truth,¹⁵ while accepting, as mankind continually explores

¹³ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.46.

¹⁴ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.444.

¹⁵ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.446.

the diversity of art and the world, that some apparently opposing viewpoints might never be reconciled.¹⁶

A thinker who accepts the many-faceted nature of reality is better placed to do justice to the various perspectives from which any object, person or situation could be viewed. The more complex, or perhaps, 'greater', the object under investigation, the more multi-faceted it will be. And as we assess Lessing, this suggests we should supplement our personal, partial access to the truth with the knowledge held by other people.¹⁷ Hölderlin's account of how we can come to know the divine relied on a similar approach.¹⁸ Whereas the theme of much of Hölderlin's thought was, however, the gradual attainment of wholeness and reconciliation, Schlegel conceived 'of the paradoxical and perspectival nature of human knowledge as an inevitable consequence of the structure of human consciousness'.¹⁹ Hence he accepted tensions and incompleteness. He shared the phrase 'endless approximation' with Hölderlin, but perhaps meaning 'rough and ready', or a 'working brief', rather than Hölderlin's ever closer movement towards completion.²⁰ Clearly, Kant's analysis of the static, given object has been abandoned here. The limited Kantian notion of aesthetic free play has been extended to cover all knowledge or perception. We shall later claim that a worldview such as Schlegel's encouraged the development of hermeneutics beyond

¹⁶ Fred Rush, 'Irony and Romantic Subjectivity', in Nikolas Kompridis, *Philosophical Romanticism*, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006, p.181.

¹⁷ Gary Handwerk, 'Romantic Irony', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.212.

¹⁸ See chapter 7 above.

¹⁹ Gary Handwerk, 'Romantic Irony', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.217.

²⁰(ed.) Michael N. Foster, Introduction, in *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.x. Foster mentions Schlegel as one of those who continued the counter-tradition in German philosophy that Herder had begun. Foster is referring to the rejection of 'systematicity'.

its narrow, theological field, to become one of the major strains of nineteenth and twentieth century European philosophy.

In the quotation on p.255 above, the word, 'inexhaustible' appears. We rejected Frank's use of this word in the context of Hölderlin,²¹ but it is an important aspect of Schlegel's view of great art. The conceptual indeterminacy that emerges from Kant's theory of the free play of the faculties during the judgement of taste, and the inadequacy of our rational concepts to the aesthetic ideas, is established here as a fundamental feature of literary appreciation. Schlegel has picked up Kant's awareness that applying a concept sets limits to the legitimate interpretation of particular perceptions. Conversely, therefore, in the absence of any determinate concept, the mind has free rein; it can not only suspend conceptual judgement, but also, according to Schlegel, explore diverse ways of conceptualising its material, all of which are likely, in their own way, to contain a certain amount of truth. Thus, every time we think we have understood something true about Lessing, or his work, we subsequently see something new that either replaces or supplements our previous thought. The possible ways of combining and structuring these perceptions of Lessing, or any great art or artist, are inexhaustible, and we can never encompass the whole truth on the subject.

This theme develops later in *Über die Unverständlichkeit*,²² where he reflected on the problems people had had in understanding the *Athenäums-Fragmente* and

²¹ Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, (tr.) Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York, 2004, Lecture 6, p.126.

See chapter 7 above.

²² F. Schlegel, 'Über die Unverständlichkeit', in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, vol.II : Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796 - 1801)*, (ed.) Hans Eichner, München; Paderborn; Wien: Verlag Ferdinand Schöninghausen, 1967, pp. 363 - 372.

Lucinde.²³ He expected their lack of comprehension to be temporary, because once Romantic *Poesie* became more familiar, the public would read these apparently difficult and confusing works with ease and enjoyment. What had once been shocking or peculiar would be accepted and appreciated. Thus, it is both desirable and essential that a public must struggle to understand or reinterpret a work of art. The struggle exemplifies some more extensive psychological and political prerequisites for human wellbeing.²⁴ The inability to grasp the whole instantly, with all its implications and variations, protects us as individuals from fully apprehending the magnitude of cosmic chaos. Our constant search for truth and improvement proceeds piecemeal, so that we are never quite aware of the scale of the task in front of us, and therefore do not reject or abandon the project completely, or contemplate failure, despite having no realistic chance of achieving closure. Thus, though *Über Lessing* confines its comment to the work of one playwright, Schlegel's method of reading literature reveals itself to be only one aspect of an entire worldview, at which he is only hinting here.

Another significant word, *Bildung*, occurs in the quotation from *Über Lessing* above. Schiller and Hölderlin, as we have seen, desired the development and education of mankind. Notice that Schlegel says we return repeatedly to valuable things, so long as our *Bildung* is still taking place. Thus, *Bildung* is equivalent to progress, and takes place only if we are interested enough to revisit the inexhaustibly interpretable, and learn more from it. Thus, part of the ongoing process of *Bildung* is the ability to recognise the inexhaustibility of a great work, or a great life, and desire to

²³ F. Schlegel, 'Über die Unverständlichkeit', in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, vol. II: Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796 - 1801)*, (ed.) Hans Eichner, München; Paderborn; Wien: Verlag Ferdinand Schöninghausen, 1967, p. 371.

²⁴ F. Schlegel, 'Über die Unverständlichkeit', in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, vol. II: Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796 - 1801)*, (ed.) Hans Eichner, München; Paderborn; Wien: Verlag Ferdinand Schöninghausen, 1967, p.370.

see what more we can gain from it, what new angles on the truth it can give us.

Although Schlegel assembles them in his own way, these concepts have become familiar to us in Schiller and Hölderlin.²⁵ Mankind's education is progressing through aesthetic activity and the attempt to make an aesthetic judgement. For Schlegel, *Bildung* is an endless creative activity of free enquiry.²⁶ We can cease to improve ourselves, but we cannot reach a point of complete education. In *Bildung*, 'I strive after unity of knowledge'.²⁷ Striving after unity is characteristic of human thought, but after a long process of enquiry, our greatest insight might turn out to be of the impossibility of completeness. Recognising this ironic result again extends our education, which is why Schlegel also believed in the value of irony as a teaching method.²⁸ This view that humans are incomplete and are driven towards something impossible is very different from Kant's conception of the human subject.

According to the quotation given above, then, the sum total of the need to consider as many perspectives as possible, the inexhaustibility of Lessing's art, and the ongoing impetus towards *Bildung* is that we shall return to Lessing's work again and again. In the same year, in *Georg Forster*, Schlegel suggested that the very mark of

²⁵ There is an interesting relationship in this claim too with Fichte's comment in the essay, 'On the Spirit and the letter in philosophy', where he objects that some readers reject out-of-hand material that is being presented to them as a result of long and careful study. They justify doing so by an appeal to the spirit of what they have read, dismissing anything with which they cannot immediately or easily engage, by claiming it is the mere letter of the text. We might expect that Fichte's remarks would be directed at least partially towards critics like Schlegel whose comments might prejudice the public reception of a serious work after only a superficial reading. Yet Schlegel the critic seems to agree with Fichte on this point.

Johan Gottlieb Fichte, 'On the spirit and the letter in philosophy, 1794', in (ed.) (tr.) David Simpson, *German aesthetic and literary criticism: Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hegel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p.75.

²⁶ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.453.

²⁷ Translated and quoted in Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.453.

²⁸ Gary Handwerk, 'Romantic Irony', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.214.

great literature is the fact that readers return to it repeatedly.²⁹ Admittedly, the readers themselves must be *klassische Leser*, well-educated and perceptive readers, if they are to appreciate those emerging as the classic German authors, but given this proviso, they should be re-reading a work in order to sharpen their impressions and absorb the best in it. A problem with literature is that we cannot easily revisit it briefly, unlike, for example, a painting or sculpture, over which we can repeatedly cast a rapid eye. According to *Georg Forster* this obstacle even hinders the development of a national, German tradition of classic writers.

The second quotation from *Über Lessing* deals with the rôle of the author:

Der erste Eindruck literarischer Erscheinungen aber ist nicht bloß unbestimmt: er ist auch selten reine Wirkung der Sache selbst, sondern gemeinschaftliches Resultat vieler mitwirkender Einflüsse und zusammentreffender Umstände. Dennoch pflegt man ihn ganz auf die Rechnung des Autors zu setzen, wodurch dieser nicht selten in ein durchaus falsches Licht gestellt wird.³⁰

All kinds of external and internal influences are at work on the reader when he or she first encounters a piece of literature or art. The author tends to be praised or blamed for our first impressions, but things are more complicated than that, and, if we overlook this, the author is often placed in a false light – for good or bad, because the reader’s hopes or expectations will already have been shaped, before he or she begins to read. Elsewhere Schlegel agrees with Novalis’s statement³¹ that the artist or author has done his work simply by placing a publication before the public. Now it is the reader’s turn to do some hard work, by engaging with the material. Schlegel’s

²⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, ‘Georg Forster’, in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.22.

³⁰ Friedrich Schlegel, ‘Über Lessing’, in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.47.

However, the first impression of literary phenomena is not merely undetermined; it is also rarely the pure effect of the item itself, but is the combined result of many contributing influences and converging circumstances. Nevertheless, we are accustomed to credit it entirely to the account of the author, which means that he is frequently placed in a completely false light.

³¹ Quoted in Gary Handwerk, ‘Romantic Irony’, in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.214.

comments here are thus part of a wider view of a partnership between writer and reader, as they jointly create the full effects of a work of art. Thus, he has extended Schiller's remarks that an audience's ability to perceive beauty in a work of art depends as much on their own level of aesthetic education, as on the characteristics of the work of art itself.³² He covers every reaction to the work of art, rather than the discernment of beauty alone, and acknowledges the mixed range of influences affecting an artist's expectations of the audience, and the audience's attitudes towards art. The recognition of beauty, or of any other quality implicated in the aesthetic response, ceases to be the result of appropriately developed observational skills on the part of the public, or of adequate communication skills on the part of the artist, and instead becomes an inexhaustible, repeatedly re-negotiated outcome, as the reader moves from first impression to more thoughtful reading or repeated readings, and as new readers, subject to a different range of external influences, encounter a work for the first time. Although Schlegel writes as if we can discover something true from literature, and, although he also indicates that the best works of art are enduring sources for discovering aspects of truth, he does not believe art gives us something with solid, objective existence in a Kantian sense. He also, quite clearly, expects us to appreciate something more than beauty alone in a work of art. The pleasure, or value we derive from art or literature encompasses our entire experience, that is, both our own subjective condition, and all kinds of features found in the work of art. This is presumably why Schlegel tells us that the work of art will lead us to understand some truth, rather than beauty in a more Kantian sense.

³² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a series of letters*, (ed.), (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson & L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, XXII; §§ 3, 6, pp.153, 157.

See chapter 5 above.

Our next quotation concerns the attitude of contemporary critics to the work of Lessing. Schlegel condemns these unnamed arbiters for their determination to claim Lessing for the classical tradition, a model exponent of the golden mean, ignoring his innovative character. The result, Schlegel sees, is that Lessing is lumped together with writers, such as Addison, whom he is known to have despised. Lessing abhorred correctness of manner without genius, an opinion which Schlegel has either projected upon him, or which the two men shared passionately:

Daß träge Dünkel, Platttheit und Vorurteil unter der Sanktion seines Namen Schutz suchen und finden! Daß man ihn und einen Addison, von dessen Zahmheit, wie ers nennt, er so verächtlich redet (wie er denn überhaupt nüchterne Korrektheit ohne Genie beinah noch mehr geringschätzt, als billig ist) zusammenpaaren mag und darf, wie man etwa *Miss Sara Sampson* und *Emilia Galotti* und *Nathan der Weise* in einem Atem und aus einem Tone bewundert, weil es doch sämtlich dramatische Werke sind!³³

In the final lines of the quotation we see that Schlegel objects even to Lessing's own plays being classified together, merely because they are dramas. We have seen how Hölderlin questioned the classical genres, but accepted their usefulness, if used flexibly. He suggested they should be and were used by poets as compositional tools, and that it was partly their selection, blending and contrast within a work that produced great poetry.³⁴ In *Über Lessing*, however, Schlegel is scathing about traditional ways of analysing poetry. He portrays the literary establishment, as hastily and summarily categorising and assessing works according to superficial and ultimately indefensible criteria. The differences even within Lessing's own works are too great for them to be analysed according to the mere fact of being dramas. Even to

³³Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.49.

To think that lethargic arrogance, banality and prejudice should seek – and even find - shelter beneath the sanction of his name! That anyone should wish and be permitted to couple him with Addison, of whose tameness, as he called it, he spoke so scornfully, (for, after all, he almost despised any kind of dry correctitude lacking in genius as being lower than cheapjack); and how anyone can admire, for instance, *Miss Sara Sampson*, *Emilia Galotti* and *Nathan der Weise* in one breath and tone of voice, just because they are all dramatic works!

³⁴ See chapter 9 above.

consider doing this illustrates how badly Schlegel's contemporaries had misunderstood Lessing's genius.

Once again Schlegel is appealing for critics to examine the spirit, rather than the letter of Lessing's *œuvre*. He was a genius, and in Kantian terminology, therefore set the rule for art. The way he did things, and the content and form of his work influenced subsequent German literature, but that should not make him a template for all subsequent writers, and it certainly did not mean he had been doing something simple or conventional at the time of writing. He had established his reputation by dealing with controversial current themes in an original way. His work was fresh and always developing. Perhaps it had been enjoyed by a society that was used to evaluating literature in accordance with classical traditions of criticism, but that did not make this way of reading him the only way, and it did not reflect the way Lessing himself had always sought to extend the boundaries of taste in his own age. It is as if Schlegel has noticed that the more conservative critics had observed only the rule-like element of genius, leading to the rule that others may follow, but had ignored the importance of the imaginative struggle that must take place first, if a writer of genius is to set such a rule, where none had previously existed or been thought of. For Schlegel's own theory, this shows he has rejected the supposedly simplistic or mechanistic approach to criticism identified with classicism. He wants to encourage innovation in the literary sphere, to encourage people to appreciate the innovative nature of what they have come to accept as a conservative literary canon, and wants that canon to be studied with a view to encouraging innovation in a current generation. Change is, then, not just accepted, but to be encouraged, a quite different view from the static world of Kantian analysis.

The next quotation is actually Schlegel's approving quotation of Lessing on

Luther:

Über Luther redet er so: »Der wahre Lutheraner will nicht bei Luthers *Schriften*, er will bei Luthers *Geist* geschützt sein, u.s.w.« (T.V, S.162)
Überhaupt war *unbegrenzte Verachtung des Buchstabens* ein Hauptzug in Lessings Charakter.³⁵

We have already referred to the importance of the relationship between spirit and letter in Schlegel's theory, and in this he thinks he follows Lessing. The scorn Lessing purportedly showed for the letter, as opposed to the spirit, suited Schlegel's approach to literary criticism and his own work. He thought Romantic *Poesie*, which included all genres, should be as free as possible from prescriptive rule-following: 'artfully ordered confusion',³⁶ achievable by moving away from adherence to 'the letter'. We are not initially told how Schlegel identified the 'spirit', but his discussion of Lessing has a historical dimension to it. He asks us to assess not just the words on Lessing's pages, but to recall the environment in which Lessing worked. He is not a novelty now (in the very last years of the eighteenth century) but was a revolutionary thinker in his time. Schlegel tries to encourage us to capture the excitement and provocative qualities of Lessing in his prime. This helps us understand his spirit, an application of the historical perspective introduced in the *Studium-Aufsatz*.

Schlegel himself claims to read Lessing impartially, because he is not a contemporary, and therefore not caught up in the prevailing opinions of Lessing's

³⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.56.

³⁶ Ernst Behler, 'Early German Romanticism: Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis', in (ed.) Simon Critchley and William R. Schroeder, *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, Maldon MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p.81.

Friedrich Schlegel, 'Gespräch über die Poesie: Rede über die Mythologie', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.195.

künstlich geordnete Verwirrung

This phrase that seems to typify Schlegel's view of Romantic *Poesie* is also quoted in David Wellbery, 'The transformation of rhetoric', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 5, Romanticism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.196.

day. There is obviously a tension here. Either we need to cast our minds back in historical time, or we have to remain free of the prejudices of the past, but presumably not both at once. However, these two positions can be reconciled. Schlegel's impartiality was aided by the fortunate circumstance:

...daß mich Lessing erst spät und nicht eher anfang zu interessieren, als bis ich fest und selbstständig genug war, um mein Augenmerk auf das Ganze richten, um mich mehr für ihn und den Geist seiner Behandlung als für die behandelten Gegenstände interessieren, und ihn *frei* betrachten zu können. Denn so lange man noch an Stoff klebt, so lange man in einer besondern Kunst und Wissenschaft, oder in der gesamten Bildung überhaupt, noch nicht durch sich selbst zu einer gewissen *Befriedigung* gelangt ist, welche dem weitem Fortschreiten so wenig hinderlich ist, daß dieses vielmehr erst durch sie gesichert wird; so lange man noch rastlos nach einem festen Stand und Mittelpunkt umherschaut: so lange ist man noch nicht frei, und noch durchaus unfähig einen Schriftsteller zu beurteilen.³⁷

He came to the study of Lessing with a maturity that enabled him to look at Lessing's work as a whole, and at how he handled his material, rather than focusing on the detail of his subject matter. Hence he could recognise the spirit of what Lessing was writing. Schlegel himself was already comfortable with his own position, no longer searching around for his own viewpoint. It is only once a reader achieves this that he can assess a writer properly. Thus, if we are to engage effectively with literature, we must take a broader, more general view, aware of our own perspective, but not entrapped in it. We thereby appreciate the spirit of the writer we are studying, and the age in which he lived, not allowing the minutiae of content or history – the so-called letter - to overwhelm our judgement. As a further example of the pitfalls involved, Schlegel refers to the common practice of using Lessing's work, *Dramaturgie*, as a

³⁷ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.58.

...that Lessing only began to interest me quite late on, and not sooner, once I was firm and independent enough to turn my attention to the whole work, and take more interest in him and the spirit in which he handled his material, rather than in the objects he was dealing with, and I could examine him freely. For, so long as we stick only to the subject matter, so long as we have not yet reached a certain fulfilment, whether in any particular art or science, or even in culture overall, that stands so little in the way of further progress that we should rather say it guarantees such progress, then we are not yet free, and we are still completely incapable of judging a writer.

source for establishing the rules of drama and pure, classical Aristotelean poetics.

Doing so, he says, completely misses the genius and originality of this highly unusual work. Modestly, Schlegel offers us his own rather distorted first impression of *Laoköon*, which he had wrongly been expecting to give him '*felsenfest*', solid knowledge about the plastic arts and their relation to poetry.

Schlegel's own experience thus illustrates the reader's situation. He is not just writing this piece, he is a reader himself, like us. His own writing, in this case, is exhibiting the essence of so-called 'transcendental poetry', as Schlegel calls Romantic literature in the *Athenäums-Fragmente*,³⁸ in that it includes 'the producer, along with the product'.³⁹ Similarly, he now tells us more about the rôle of the writer, by going on to discuss his own experience of writing. Firstly for the writer, there is, as he found, the absorbing task of reading and reflecting on the man's works. But the danger is that the writer will stop there. Writing of himself in the first person, Schlegel has

...vieles für mich bemerkt und für mich geschrieben, darüber aber immer den beabsichtigten Druck weiter hinausgeschoben, oft gänzlich vergessen habe. Denn das Interesse des Studiums überwog hier das Interesse der öffentlichen Mitteilung, welches immer schwächer ist, so sehr, daß ich, ohne einen kategorischen Entschluß wohl immer an einen Aufsatz über Lessing nur gearbeitet haben würde, ohne ihn jemals zu vollenden.⁴⁰

This gives us a small insight into the work of Schlegel as a writer, though telling us also something of writing in general. The writer has two motivations, the stronger of

³⁸ See chapter 12 below.

³⁹ Ernst Behler, 'Early German Romanticism: Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis', in (ed.) Simon Critchley and William R. Schroeder, *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, Maldon MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p.78.

See chapter 9 above for Hölderlin's view of the three factors that actively contribute towards creating a written work.

⁴⁰ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.59.

...noticed and written a lot for myself, but I have always kept postponing the intended printing, and have often forgotten it completely. For my interest in study outweighed my interest in public communication, which is always weaker, so much so, that, without a categorical decision, I suppose I would only have kept working at an essay on Lessing, without ever completing it.

which, is ‘for himself’. This is the writer as researcher, thinker or composer. But what really turns him into a writer is the intention to publish. Yet Schlegel says the motivation towards communicating his ideas publicly is weaker than the desire to enjoy and extend his own thoughts. While this is a very personal admission, it is probably also a more realistic assessment of the writer’s task than, for instance, Fichte’s, who claimed communication with the reader and a public in general was the primary and only purpose of writing.⁴¹ Schlegel admits that his notes were really for himself, a record and stimulus to thought, not for a public readership. Public communication is a separate activity, the result only of a ‘categorical decision’. This sounds like a difficult decision, that runs contrary to inclination, redolent of all the self-denying concomitants of the Kantian morality. Once again, here is Schlegel’s belief that the right explanation is often paradoxical, reflecting the contradictory nature of human experience.⁴² Trivially, a writer is a communicator, and, if he did not take that categorical decision to publish, he would not be a writer. But in fact, although he may initially wish to get something on a certain topic published, this is not what he enjoys most or what motivates him. This is the furthest this thesis has brought us so far from Kant’s philosophical approach to aesthetics. Kant wrote critical philosophy with little practical knowledge of creative literary work or art, Schiller interrupted his artistic career to try and tackle aesthetic issues from a philosophical point of view. Schlegel here seems to be concerned only with analysing the practicalities of being a good writer, or the functions of writing, and comparatively little with the more traditional, philosophical aspects.

⁴¹ J.C Fichte, ‘On the Spirit and the Letter in Philosophy’, in (ed.) Daniel Breazeale, *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, New York: Cornell, University Press, 1988.

⁴² Gary Handwerk, ‘Romantic Irony’, in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.212.

Stylistically, this interlude in *Über Lessing* is an excellent illustration of Schlegelian irony. He prefaces his comments on the difficulties of writing about Lessing with the words:

Die Magie dieses eignen Reizes wächst mit dem Gebrauch und ich kann der Lockung selten widerstehen. Ja, ich muß über mich selbst lächeln, wenn ich mir vorstelle, wie oft ich ihr...⁴³

On the previous page he had reflected on his own first encounter with Lessing's *Laocöon* to illustrate his point, but now he intrudes even further into his own text in a personal and friendly way, as if sharing confidences with his readers. And yet, the confidence he is about to share with us, his closest friends, is that he does not really like writing for publication – ie. for us - and would find it much easier to make jottings for his own information. *Über Lessing* exhibits an irony that is characteristic of Romantic art and of Schlegel's successful reviews and commentaries, a genre of literary criticism that he more or less invented.⁴⁴ Lessing, and everything we learn about him, is set within the frame of 'Schlegel-writing-on-Lessing'. However absorbed we become in the skills or opinions of Lessing, the form of the essay never lets us forget the presence of the actual author, Schlegel. However, Schlegel's aim, given what we have already said about the interaction between writer and reader, is to get us thinking about what he says about Lessing, and thence about Lessing himself. Thus, readers might forget they are working within a frame, and become totally absorbed in their reflections on Lessing. Indeed, at one further level, Schlegel even gets us involved in reflecting on 'Lessing's-thoughts-about-Luther', as we have seen above. Then, through the example of *Laocöon*, he suddenly reminds us that we are not

⁴³ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.59.

The magic of its particular charm grows with habit, and I can rarely resist its allure. Indeed, I have to smile at myself, when I picture how often I...

⁴⁴ See the later references to irony in chapter 12.

reflecting on Lessing directly, but on someone else's opinions of the man. His bold use of the conversational, '*Ja, ich muß über mich selbst lächeln*', even reminds us in an intimate and conversational way, that we are not really just sharing and reflecting on Schlegel's opinions or experiences, but are reading a very artificially and specifically planned piece of writing. He has included something about how the essay was written, even within the essay itself. But, of course, that little conversation he has just had with us is not a real conversation, either. It is an integrated part of the artificially planned writing. It is a calculating move that attempts to fool us into thinking that he has stripped away every possible layer of artistic illusion. And his little piece of 'transcendental buffoonery',⁴⁵ his apparently private, but in fact very public, joke is that, in so doing, he creates another layer of illusion. Perhaps this seems like an unnecessarily laboured explanation of what Schlegel has done here, of how he thought written communication worked, and the way he thought Romantic irony permeates every work of art. However, by spelling out some of these levels of artistic illusion, we see in practical terms what Schlegel meant by his well-known metaphor of how poetry can multiply self-reflection as if in an endless succession of mirrors.⁴⁶ These many levels reflect each other, creating an infinite regress of irony. Schiller's notion of semblance shares some of these features, in that, we may recall, it involves simultaneously accepting an artistic illusion, and recognising that it is illusory.

⁴⁵ Ernst Behler, 'Early German Romanticism: Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis', in (ed.) Simon Critchley and William R. Schroeder, *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, Maldon MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p.80.

⁴⁶ Ernst Behler, 'Early German Romanticism: Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis', in (ed.) Simon Critchley and William R. Schroeder, *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, Maldon MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p.78.

Athenäums-Fragmente, no.116.

While acknowledging the high quality of Lessing's prose, Schlegel later claims that the most fundamental and interesting aspect of Lessing's writings is the way he gives only hints and indications of what he means:

Das Interessanteste und das Gründlichste in seinen Schriften sind Winke und Andeutungen, das reifste und Vollendetste Bruchstücke von Bruchstücken. Das Beste was Lessing sagt, ist was er, wie erraten und erfunden, in ein paar gediegenen (sterling, dignified, solid, genuine) Worten voll Kraft, Geist und Salz hinwirft; Worte, in denen, was die dunkelsten Stellen sind im Gebiet des menschlichen Geistes, oft wie vom Blitz plötzlich erleuchtet...⁴⁷

Lessing, then, is the master of the fragment. Well, perhaps this is so; but, more famously, Schlegel entertained the greatest hopes for perpetuating the fragment as an illuminating philosophical or critical format. Thinking he could recognise the same qualities and intentions in Lessing's work gave Schlegel a source that confirmed the wisdom of what he was already doing for himself. In addition:

...stehen seine [d.h. Lessings] Hauptsätze da, wie mathematische Axiome...⁴⁸

This is what Schlegel hoped would be the fate of the main clauses in his own fragments too. There is obviously also a little word play here, because he hopes not only that what he says will acquire the incontestability of a mathematical axiom, but that his 'main clauses' will thereby be transformed into 'fundamental theorems', the alternative meaning of '*Hauptsätze*'. However, although the axiomatic character of Lessing's assertions has an imposing and attractive quality in a literary context, Schlegel regarded the model of Euclidean geometry, devising logically irreproachable

⁴⁷Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.60.

The most interesting and fundamental* things in his texts are hints and indications, the ripest and most perfect fragments of fragments. The best things Lessing says are what he throws in, as if guessed, or invented, a few sterling words full of strength, spirit and salt; words in which the very darkest recesses of the human spirit light up, as if by a flash of lightning.

**gründlich* could also mean 'fundamental, basic' (*grundsätzlich*) at that date.

⁴⁸Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.60.

...his main clauses (or fundamental theorems) stand there like mathematical axioms...

proofs of conclusions, supposedly based on axiomatic self-evident principles, as another analogy that had misled contemporary foundationalist epistemology. He accepted its mathematical validity, but regarded it as a poor way of establishing general truths.⁴⁹ Not only fragments, but also our knowledge is incomplete and unsatisfying, a mere illusion of knowledge or certainty. Irony allowed the writer to create, expose and shatter this illusion. While this approach, if used not only as a literary device, but also in the field of knowledge, might seem to lead to insurmountable scepticism, Schlegel was unconcerned by this. He felt it was only the timidity of professional philosophers that made them fear scepticism. Their fear impelled a search for a certainty unattainable in any aspect of human life, and particularly not in scientific research. He believed philosophy should accommodate scepticism. Beiser assembles a selection of quotations from Schlegel's essay on republicanism, showing that Schlegel blamed foundationalism itself for the problem of infinite regress.⁵⁰

Reinforcing the importance of producing fragments, and perhaps thinking of his own *Kritische Fragmente* (1797), Schlegel observes of Lessing:

...seine bündigsten Rasonnements sind gewöhnlich nur eine Kette von witzigen Einfällen.⁵¹

One of the features of fragments is fluidity in the way they could relate together logically. Reflecting on a series of pithy observations might lead the thoughtful reader to construct a standpoint or a coherent train of thought on behalf of the writer. Thus fragments encourage readers to participate in the writer's thinking, and re-create the

⁴⁹ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.436.

⁵⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, pp.436, 439.

⁵¹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.60.

...his most succinct reasonings are usually only a chain of witty ideas...

writer's argument; or, if the writer himself had struggled to find coherence among a gradually assembling range of experiences, thoughts and perceptions, the reader would effectively be attributing his own insights to the writer, who would be permitting the reader to develop his or her own moral autonomy, and encouraging self-reflection.⁵² Although Lessing was a great writer, Schlegel's own excitement about the new way of working that he was trying to legitimate and popularise might have led him to over-emphasise these facets of Lessing.

In *Über Lessing*, Schlegel not only gives us his own evaluation of Lessing, but also some brief indications of Lessing's own thoughts. This leads into the question of how much weight can be attached to Lessing's opinions. Unsurprisingly, Schlegel's view of the possibility of self-knowledge is more like Hölderlin's than Kant's:

Ganz und im strengsten Sinn kennt niemand sich selbst. Von dem Standpunkt der gegenwärtigen Bildungsstufe reflektiert man über die zunächst vorhergegangne, und ahnet die kommende: aber den Boden, auf dem man steht, sieht man nicht.⁵³

The first factor that might affect our ability to know ourselves is our current state of *Bildung*, which we always use as a current viewpoint, looking forward to the immediately coming future, or back on the immediate past. We thus do not ever know the contemporaneous ego. Schlegel's reference to the current present moment as '*Den Boden auf dem man steht...*' makes it sound as if we perhaps have the choice of looking down at our feet and seeing what is actually there. However, if we compare this with Hölderlin's analysis of the passage of time and the infinity of Being in '*Das untergehende Vaterland...*', for Hölderlin there was no ground beneath our feet at the

⁵² Gary Handwerk, 'Romantic Irony', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.214.

⁵³ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.63.

No one can know himself completely and in the strictest sense. From the standpoint of our present level of cultural development we can reflect on what has only just passed, and anticipate what is coming: but the ground we are standing on we cannot see.

present instant.⁵⁴ We must not read too much into what Schlegel has written, admittedly, since he gives us no explicit theory of Being, but he characterises the world in terms of becoming, accepting the Fichtean phenomenon of ‘hovering’ and *Wechselerweis*.⁵⁵ Therefore there is perhaps a hovering moment between past and future, while future becomes past, in which the self has no cognitive knowledge of itself, since ‘*Mehr ist dem Menschen nicht gegönnt*’.⁵⁶ Schlegel accepts what is unresolved, the ‘infinite relativity of knowledge’,⁵⁷ rather than trying to circumvent or explain the apparent limitations on human knowledge:

...the most precious thing that human beings possess, their own inner satisfaction, finally depends upon some such point that must be left in the dark, yet which for that very reason bears and supports the whole, and which would lose its force at the very moment we wished to dissolve it into understanding.⁵⁸

This sums up his attitude towards the human search for self-knowledge, and why it is impossible to attain ‘full’ knowledge.

...we are inconceivable to ourselves, only appear to ourselves as a part of ourselves⁵⁹

Thus, although the independent observer has a good vantage point from which to judge the work of others, Lessing’s thoughts on his own works are not definitive,

⁵⁴See chapter 7 above.

J. Ch. Friedrich Hölderlin, ‘Das untergehende Vaterland’, in *Theoretische Schriften*, (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.34.

The present moment occurs ‘Im Zustande zwischen Seyn und Nichtseyn’, in the condition between Being and not-Being.

⁵⁵ Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of German Romanticism*, trans. Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, p.203.

⁵⁶ Friedrich Schlegel, ‘Über Lessing’, in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.63.

Mankind is not granted anything more than this.

⁵⁷ Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of German Romanticism*, trans. Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, p.205.

⁵⁸Translated and quoted in Gary Handwerk, ‘Romantic Irony’, in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.224.

⁵⁹Translated and quoted in Gary Handwerk, ‘Romantic Irony’, in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.220.

because of his necessarily limited view of himself; however, in keeping with the tenor of the whole essay, Schlegel thinks Lessing is more self-aware than most other writers. Schlegel's claim about the inadequacy of self-knowledge is a slight withdrawal from his hints in the *Studium-Aufsatz* that the writer's intention helped establish the critic's frame of reference,⁶⁰ but it reinforces the idea that a readership brings its own valid responses and interpretations to the work that the writer has published, and thus made public property. He thus also provides some support for the hermeneuticists' later view that the author's interpretation of a text is only one among many valid possibilities.⁶¹

The specific limit that Schlegel identifies on Lessing's ability to criticise his own poetry effectively is his lack of any sense of history.

Vielleicht hätte er aber auch noch außerdem etwas haben müssen, was ihm ganz fehlte, nämlich historischen Geist, um aus seiner Philosophie klug werden zu können, und sich seiner Ironie und seines Zynismus bewußt zu werden.⁶²

While this may indeed have been one of Lessing's shortcomings, it is also one of Schlegel's recurrent objections to rationalist philosophy and the Enlightenment in general. It is the starting point and motivation for the more historicist theory of poetry that carried over from the *Studium-Aufsatz*. Rationalist philosophy searches for eternal certainties independently of cultural context. A corollary of Schlegel's position that the premisses of rationalist-foundationalist arguments can always be questioned was that, in practice, we always have to make decisions about which out of many logical

⁶⁰ See Chapter 10 above.

⁶¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Hermeneutics and Social Science*, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p.31.

⁶² Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.64.

But perhaps he would also have needed something else besides, in which he was completely lacking, namely, the historical spirit, in order to make sense of his philosophy, and to manifest his own irony and cynicism.

possibilities is correct.⁶³ The effect of this is that ‘Only the historical, constructive representation is objective, that which no longer requires any demonstrative form’,⁶⁴ Thus, rather than on logical argument, we base our knowledge on experience, culture or history. Since Schlegel believed we should use other perspectives besides our own, a benefit of history is that it provides us with a wealth of alternative perspectives through which we can approximate to the truth, independently of logical demonstration.

Great though Lessing was, this means, on closer analysis, that *Emilia Galotti*, one of his masterpieces, lacks the more human, poetic touch.⁶⁵ In a way, his comments on this play hark back to an older debate, questioning Baumgarten’s definition of beauty as logical perfection.⁶⁶ Lessing’s careful application of the conventions of drama has produced something excellent of its kind, but the overall effect is, Schlegel says, cold. We come to understand the spirit of a work through its overall effect. But this play seems so cold and cerebral, the reader cannot engage with it, as if it did not grow from Lessing’s own humanity. The comments on *Emilia*

⁶³Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.445.

⁶⁴ Translated and quoted in Gary Handwerk, ‘Romantic Irony’, in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.220.

⁶⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, ‘Über Lessing’, in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.65.

Und was ist denn nun diese bewunderte und gewiß bewunderungswürdige *Emilia Galotti*? Unstreitig ein großes Exempel der dramatischen Algebra. Man muß es bewundern dieses in Schweiß und Pein produzierte Meisterstück des reinen Verstandes; man muß es frierend bewundern, und bewundernd frieren; denn ins Gemüt dringt nicht und kanns nicht dringen, weil es nicht aus dem Gemüt gekommen ist. Es ist in der Tat unendlich viel Verstand darin, nämlich *prosaischer*, ja sogar Geist und Witz. ...Es fehlt doch an jenem *poetischem* Verstande.

Schlegel uses the word *Gemüt*, which is usually more or less synonymous with *Geist*, both words meaning ‘mind’. However, *Gemüt* can also mean ‘spirit’, and it seems that, in this context, Schlegel is thinking of Lessing’s distinctive human spirit, not just his mental faculties.

⁶⁶Rather perversely, Schlegel also tells us in *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.42 that irony is logical beauty, but it is clear that this does not mean ‘perfection in perception’ in Baumgarten’s sense. *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.42 seems to mean there is beauty in the unfolding of an argument and the resultant interplay of irony.

Galotti throw additional light onto the rôle of irony. Despite Schlegel's references to 'the divine breath of irony' and the 'logical beauty'⁶⁷ of irony, it is not the only quality demanded of poetry. A work may exhibit spirit and wit, yet be prose-like, not poetic. Perhaps *Emilia Galotti* is 'prosaic', too formulaic, rule-bound and run-of-the-mill. To raise it to the level of *Poesie* the play needed poetic understanding rather than pure reason. And, it therefore seems that poetic understanding must be a function of the *Gemüt*, the warm-hearted humanity of the poet. *Witz* alone is not enough.

In den genialischen Werken des von diesem poetischen Verstande geleiteten Instinkts, enthüllt alles, was beim ersten Blick so wahr aber auch so inkonsequent und eigensinnig (= headstrong, hard-headed), wie die Natur selbst auffällt, bei gründlicherem Forschen stets innigere Harmonie und tiefere Notwendigkeit.⁶⁸

By contrast, works led by poetic reason have more to them than first meets the eye.

However trivial or naturalistic their content may at first appear, deep-seated harmony or profound necessity lies at their heart.

This is not the case with *Emilia Galotti*:

Ich möchte es (= *Emilia Galotti*) eine *prosaische Tragödie* nennen. Sonderbar aber nicht eben interessant ist, wie die Charaktere zwischen Allgemeinheit und Individualität in der Mitte schweben!⁶⁹

The way the characters hover in the middle ground between generalisation and individuality is curious, but not really absorbing. Again we meet *schweben*, Schlegel's adapted Fichteian key term, given a central rôle in aesthetics. It refers to the hovering, or hesitation, of the mind as it is challenged and defeated in its attempts to apply a

⁶⁷ Translated and quoted in Ernst Behler, 'Early German Romanticism: Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis', in (ed.) Simon Critchley and William R. Schroeder, *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, Maldon MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p.79.

See also chapter 12 below..

⁶⁸ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.65.

In works of genius produced by this instinct that is led by poetic understanding, everything that strikes us at first sight to be as true, and yet as inconsequential and hard-headed, as nature itself, is revealed on more thorough investigation to be inner harmony and deeper necessity.

⁶⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.65.

definite concept to the essentially indefinable work of art. Once again, the presence of only a single one of Schlegel's key concepts is not enough to impart full poetic value to the work of art. *Emilia Galotti* can perhaps be called a work of poetic art, but *Nathan der Weise* is a work of poetic genius.⁷⁰

Nathan der Weise, Schlegel says, was written from the heart, which we feel as we read it. It is perfused with the spirit of God, though this makes it hard to categorise. However, this has not deterred traditional critics from attempting to do so, and becoming involved in fruitless arguments about whether it is a didactic play or a comedy.⁷¹ In the course of these arguments, they lose sight of the play's spirit.

According to Schlegel, Lessing wrote *Nathan der Weise* in the enthusiasm of pure reason, a paradoxical condition to be in, and Lessing gave us some idea of how he came to write it and what his intentions were in some of his letters.⁷² This blind fervour explains why the play defies categorisation, and contributes to its being a work of genius. Lessing has imparted some of his own inspiration to the overall spirit of the play itself, and the reader or audience can respond to this. This one

⁷⁰ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.66.

⁷¹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.66.

Nathan kam aber freilich aus dem Gemüt, und dringt wieder hinein; er ist vom schwebendem Geist Gottes unverkennbar durchglüht und überhaucht. Nur scheint es schwer, ja fast unmöglich, das sonderbare Werk zu rubrizieren und unter Dach und Fach zu bringen. ... Mehr besorgt um den Namen als um den Mann, und um die Registrierung der Werke als um den Geist, hat man die nicht minder komischen als didaktischen Frage aufgeworfen: ob *Nathan* wohl zur *didaktischen Dichtart*, oder zur *komischen*, oder zu welchem andern; und was er noch haben oder nicht haben müßte, um dies und jenes zu sein oder nicht zu sein,

But admittedly, *Nathan* came from the mind and penetrates back into it. It glows right through and is unmistakably enveloped with the hovering spirit of God. The only thing that seems difficult, indeed, even impossible, is how to bring this work under any rubric, and pin it down... More concerned with the name than the man, and with how to index it than with its spirit, people have raised the no less comic than didactic question, whether *Nathan* belongs to the didactic genre, or the comedic, or to what other kind; and what it would need to have or not have in order to belong or not to belong to this or that genre,

⁷² Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, 67.

characteristic can override certain technical deficiencies, which would otherwise detract from a great work of poetic art:

Nur wenn NATHAN *weiter nichts wäre, als ein großes dramatisches Kunstwerk*, so würde ich Verse wie den:

»Noch bin ich völlig auf dem trocken nicht;«

im Munde der Fürstin bei der edelsten Stimmung und im rührendsten Verhältnis schlechthin fehlerhaft, ja recht sehr lächerlich finden.⁷³

Thus, some of the words Lessing has chosen for his characters to speak are *prima facie* ridiculous, but are redeemed by the play itself. From what Schlegel has said, we have to suppose that genius, writing from the heart and the writer's rational fervour are the three interrelated factors that elevate *Nathan der Weise* above *Emilia Galotti*. Kant and Schiller were suspicious of *Enthusiasmus*, *Schwärmerei* or *Begeisterung*. We have also defended Hölderlin against the charge of enthusiasm. Schlegel, however, indicated that emotional fervour is essential in artworks of genius, consciously rejecting the disparaging associations of these words.⁷⁴ He wished to convey that something in the greatest poetic works touches the feelings of readers or audiences. He decided to challenge the word's pejorative force, and use it in a more Platonic sense,⁷⁵ to accord with his idea that an elusive something is present in the

⁷³ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.70.

Only if NATHAN *were nothing more than a great dramatic work of art*, then I would find lines, such as:

'I am still not completely home and dry;'

spoken by the princess in the noblest mood and in relation to the most moving circumstances, plainly flawed, indeed, really very ridiculous. (Capitalisation and italics are Schlegel's own.)

⁷⁴ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.457.

The *reductio ad absurdum* of any philosophy up until Schlegel's time would be that it 'opened the gates to enthusiasm'.

⁷⁵ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.457.

The allusion is to *The Phaedrus*. There it is 'the third kind of madness'. It comes from the Muses and is called poetic inspiration.

very greatest works of art, besides mere technical skill or ability.⁷⁶ Thus, his introduction of the term *Enthusiasmus* into the discourse of aesthetics is another example of Romantic irony at work.

Lessing, though one of the first writers to be praised by a Romantic critic for enthusiasm, was nevertheless able to exercise fine poetic judgement in writing *Nathan der Weise*,

Die hohe philosophische Würde des Stücks hat Lessing selbst ungemein schön mit der theatralischen Effektslosigkeit oder Effektwidrigkeit desselben kontrastiert; mit dem seinem Ton eignen pikanten Gemisch von ruhiger inniger tiefer Begeisterung und naïver Kälte.⁷⁷

Perhaps this is Lessing's 'pure reason', or 'rational' fervour. The play is a mixture of deep enthusiasm and naïve coldness, he tells us, so we can draw from this that Lessing was fully, and coldly conscious of the need for a strong naïve, or naturalistic element in his writing. The play is warmed by enthusiasm, but not out of control. Although, unlike Schiller or Hölderlin, Schlegel does not use the terms 'harmony' or 'balance' at this precise point, we can judge from the various component features contributing to the success of *Nathan der Weise*, that there is some undefined way in which the poet has decided how to blend his 'spicy mixture' so perfectly. There is a correct mix, that only the poetic genius can judge, but which, once discovered, communicates itself effectively to the reader or audience. We might suppose that this is how a work is able to exhibit '*innigere Harmonie und tiefere Notwendigkeit*'.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ In one sense, this upholds the distinction to which Kant had given prominence earlier in the decade, ie. the difference between art and mere craft-based skill. However, Schlegel seems to believe more generally, that there is more to art than craft alone, not that craft is redundant. The fact that Lessing's 'reason' necessarily combined with his fervour also suggests this.

⁷⁷ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.70.

Lessing himself contrasted the high philosophical dignity of the play in an uncommonly beautiful way with its lack of or contrareity to theatrical effect, in that its tone, so particular to him, is a spicy mixture of peaceful, deep, heartfelt rapture and a naïve chill.

⁷⁸ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.65.

Man sollte überhaupt die Idee aufgeben, den *Nathan* auf irgendeine Art von Einheit bringen, oder ihn in eine der vom Gesetz und Herkommen geheiligten Fakultäten des menschlichen Geistes einzäunen und einzunften (= affiliate it to a recognised guild) zu können; denn bei der gewaltsamen Reduktion und Einverleibung (= assimilation) möchte doch wohl immer mehr verloren gehn, als die ganze Einheit wert ist. ...denn das Wichtigste und Beste darin reicht weit über das, was der trockne Beweis allein vermag, mit mathematischer Präzision in eine logische Formel zusammenfassen ließ?⁷⁹

Schlegel thus concludes that the repeated attempts to classify *Nathan der Weise*, and thereby give it unity, actually diminish Lessing's achievement. They reintroduce the reductive methods of the mathematical analogy that Lessing had successfully shaken off between writing *Emilia Galotti* and *Nathan der Weise*.

Es lebt und schwebt ein gewisses heiliges Etwas in *Nathan*, wogegen alle syllogistischen Figuren, wie alle Regeln der dramatischen Dichtkunst, eine wahre Lumperei sind.⁸⁰

Lessing's greatness is thus not just inexhaustible, as Schlegel told us in the opening pages of the essay, but ultimately elusive and irreducible, mocking the closed critical systems of previous critics.

This raises the question of Schlegel's attitude towards the concept of genre as such. On the basis of *Über Lessing* he seems unlikely to want to reject it altogether. His objection is to unproductive pedantry. Thus, firstly, the identification of genre may not be the most important or rewarding thing to establish about a work, unless it drew attention to genuinely significant features of any work of art. Secondly, it should not be presumed that, once drawn, the boundaries of genre can never be redefined. His doctrine of the hovering mind shows the importance for perception and understanding of fluidity and becoming. His view of language emphasises the impossibility of fully communicating the intentions of the speaker, while also

⁷⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.71.

There is a certain holy something living and floating in *Nathan*, by contrast with which every syllogistic figure, and all the rules of dramatic poetry are a truly are just shabby trickery

⁸⁰ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.72. (Schlegel's spelling)

communicating a great deal more than the speaker intended.⁸¹ *Über Lessing* thus illustrates Schlegel's conception of irony, his ability to view paradox in a positive light and his constant criticism and evaluation. So-called scepticism should be a positive force in the pursuit of knowledge, not a problem.⁸² Whereas the critical philosophy looked for the theoretical limits of knowledge, and the kinds of knowledge that could be trusted or justified, Schlegel believed no standard of knowledge could be applied, unless we already had some claim to knowledge in mind. Thus, criticism belongs with the process of enquiry, and we must criticise our cognitive powers not prior to, but while using them.⁸³ This inextricability of knowledge and criticism powers Schlegel's later explanation of irony.⁸⁴ No statement stands alone without criticism, and no critical faculty can operate without any claim to knowledge. Claiming this is not an admission of defeat, but is often what gives the products of human thought their aesthetic value, the irony that he also refers to as 'logical beauty'.⁸⁵

Accompanying Schlegel's critical methods, however, we find his belief in the beneficence of nature:

⁸¹Gary Handwerk, 'Romantic Irony', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Volume V, Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.223.

⁸²Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.445.

Athenäums-Fragmente, no.400, recognised that true scepticism 'begins and ends with an infinite number of contradictions', but is rarely found.

Es gibt doch gar keinen Skeptizismus, der den Namen verdient. Ein solcher müßte mit der Behauptung und Forderung unendlich vieler Widersprüche anfangen und endigen. ...Respekt vor der Mathematik, und Appellieren an den gesunden Menschenverstand sind die diagnostischen Zeichen des halben unechten Skeptizismus.

⁸³Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.445.

⁸⁴ See chapter 12 below.

⁸⁵ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.42. As its source for the *Lyceums-Fragmente*, this thesis uses: (ed.) Hans Eichner, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Vol.2, Part I: Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796 - 1801), Paderborn; Munich; Vienna: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Zürich: Thomas-Verlag, 1967. Hereafter *Lyceums-Fragmente*.

...die sittliche Einheit der biedern (= worthy, unadulterated) Natur.⁸⁶

Perhaps his admiration for wit and irony, which seem rather brittle and artificial, sit awkwardly with a genuine love of nature and the natural. However, the wholeness of nature embraces many apparent contradictions. Furthermore, as Schlegel asks rhetorically, surely

...jedes Verhältnis, wo die künstelnde Unnatur ihren Gipfel erreicht, eben dadurch sich selbst überspringt, und den Weg zur Rückkehr nach unbedingter Natur-Freiheit wieder öffnet?⁸⁷

Nathan der Weise thus passes beyond the point of artificial anti-nature, and indicates a way back to nature and freedom, a claim reminiscent of Schiller's idea that beauty can lead us to freedom, and his hopes that sentimental literature will take us back into a relationship with nature at a higher level.⁸⁸ We noted, when discussing Schiller, that this was itself an idea adapted from Kant, for whom art should imitate nature, and nature art.⁸⁹ The life in Lessing's work achieves this. Schlegel's final words give this essay the kind of circular form that he believed was typical of every train of thought. The proper form of a system is not linear, but circular, beginning from any proposition, and then returning to it again.⁹⁰

So paradox endigte Lessing auch in der Poesie, wie überall! Das erreichte Ziel erklärt und rechtfertigt die ekzentrische Laufbahn;⁹¹

⁸⁶Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.73.

⁸⁷Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.74.

...every relation in which artificial unnaturalness reaches its peak overleaps itself in doing so, and reopens a way for us to return to unconditional natural freedom.

⁸⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.63.

⁸⁹ Immanuel Kant, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, *Critique of the power of judgement*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §45, 5:306, p.185.

⁹⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, ch.4, p.446.

⁹¹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.74.

Thus, paradoxically, Lessing created a work of poetry in *Nathan der Weise*. Note Schlegel's reference to the eccentric path, which we met when discussing Hölderlin,⁹² in this penultimate paragraph of the essay. Lessing's final achievement justifies his method.

This fairly careful reading through a single essay by Friedrich Schlegel has provided us with a good picture of his aesthetic theory in 1797. From Kant he has retained mainly the belief that art and its 'beautiful' qualities cannot be definitively categorised or conceptualised, but, more widely, he suggests there are many ways in which a great work can be appreciated, and that each new exploration reveals something fresh. It is no longer uncontroversial to suggest that the reader should be trying to identify beauty, whether subjectively within his or her own responses, or objectively as a property of the art object. Schlegel has paid little attention to the possibility that Lessing's work might be beautiful, but a considerable amount of attention to the ways in which wiser or more foolish people might interpret its meaning, content and structure. Together, these features seem to be contributing to the inner life of the work, and this, which possibly reminds us of Kant's definition of artistic 'spirit',⁹³ comes through as the defining element in a great work of art. We have already suggested that Schlegel's ideas linked into the developing area of philosophical hermeneutics. In the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher, '*Leben* therefore comes to replace the *Geist* as both the central ontological concept and the leading methodological principle.'⁹⁴ *Über Lessing* illustrates the fact that, to whatever extent Schlegel wished to abandon old ideas of system, his way of working was thorough and methodical. The workings, as it were, of his philosophical thought are not fully

⁹² See chapter 6 above.

⁹³ Immanuel Kant, , *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, (trans.) Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §49, 5:314, p.192.

⁹⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Hermeneutics and Social Science*, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p.30.

visible in this work of literary criticism, but they are hinted at and consistent, and have been arrived at as the result of some detailed philosophical study. Some ideas from this well-structured essay also appear in an apparently random order in his collections of fragments. In the same way that we described Hölderlin as being primarily a poet, although he had worked out an arguably sound philosophical position, so too, Schlegel is not a 'mere' literary theorist. He was someone who chose to apply his philosophical studies mainly in the field of literary criticism.

CHAPTER 12

KEY TERMS USED BY FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL - THE *FRAGMENTE*¹

Ein gutes Rätsel sollte witzig sein, sonst bleibt nichts, sobald das Wort gefunden ist.²

Chapters 10 and 11 have considered the way Schlegel's version of aesthetics developed, but one of the puzzles Schlegel presented to his public and to posterity was that his terminology, which also became the terminology of Romanticism, did not develop at the same pace, and was not defined methodically.³ Words, such as *Poesie*, *Ironie*, *Witz*, *Roman* and *romantisch*, some of which we have encountered already, all recur in the *Fragmente*. The term 'fragment' is a little misleading, because these brief texts are carefully designed and self-contained, though sometimes aphoristic and enigmatic in their brevity.⁴ Schlegel was proud of having introduced this literary form

¹ These brief and aphoristic pieces were printed in the Schlegel brothers' periodicals *Lyceum* (1797) and *Athenäum* (1798-1800) in Jena.

The source for the *Athenäums-Fragmente* is: (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997. Hereafter *Athenäums-Fragmente*.

² *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.96.

A good puzzle (or riddle) must be witty, otherwise there is nothing left once the answer (or word) has been found.

This chapter tries to piece together what Schlegel conveyed about Romanticism in the *Fragmente*. Given that this process has some similarities with answering a riddle, it seemed fitting to preface the exercise with Schlegel's own thoughts on riddles. The reader will find that, even if we solve his riddle, there is still plenty left.

³ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.53.

Es ist gleich tödlich für den Geist, ein System zu haben, und keins zu haben. Er wird sich also wohl entschließen müssen, beides zu verbinden.

It is equally fatal to the spirit to have a system, and to have none. The mind therefore has to make a decision to combine the two.

⁴ see *Lyceums-Fragmente*, nos. 59 & 111 for evidence of his admiration for Chamfort, whose aphorisms were translated in 1796 by A.W. Schlegel.

Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.46.

The most famous expression of Schlegel's aim is the 'hedgehog' fragment: *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.206.

Ein Fragment muß gleich einem Kunstwerke von der umgebenden Welt ganz abgesondert und in sich selbst vollendet sein wie ein Igel.

A fragment must be like a work of art, totally separate from the surrounding world, and complete in itself, like a hedgehog.

into the German language, and saw it as a way of stimulating philosophical and literary thought. They cover a breadth of subject matter, and each throws light on Schlegel's theory of art and the Romantic movement. The selection discussed below illustrates Schlegel's terminology, and thus, his guiding ideas of change and becoming, and the constant fusing, unifying, dissolution and reformation of the often contradictory strands of human life and the world in general.⁵

Poesie

To begin with *Poesie*. The German word for poetry is *Dichtung*, which also carries the sense of 'composition', the process of writing a poem, and hence of writing any work of intended literary merit. It is also the result of that creative process, which, while it might usually be a poem, could also be some other form of literature. Thus, even the straightforward German word for poetry places more emphasis on creativity than on genre. Sometimes Schlegel uses *dichten* or *Dichtung*; at other times he uses the latinized word, *Poesie*.⁶ After the *Studium-Aufsatz* he used *Dichtung* in a non-evaluative sense, while *Poesie* had either an aesthetic or emotive function. Thus, for Schlegel, *Poesie* is even less genre-specific than *Dichtung*. Often there is no reason why we should think it has anything to do with poetry as a literary form. It is connected with poetry only in the sense that a flowing river can be 'pure poetry', or we can be seized by a poetic vision, use poetic turns of phrase, or bring out the poetry in our soul, whereas Poetry (*Dichtung*) can be good or bad. *Poesie* is always the real thing; the kind of literary result to which all writers aspire, and from which all readers benefit. It manifests indifferently as drama, poetry or prose; in the form of an essay,

⁵ John C. Blankenagel, 'The dominant characteristics of German Romanticism', in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol.55, no.1, Mar. 1940, esp. pp.2-5, provides a rapid survey of many other fragments and the contribution their content made to the development of German Romanticism.

⁶ The edition of Schlegel's collected works shows that when editing the *Studium-Aufsatz* he tended to replace the word *Dichtung* with *Poesie*. Sometimes he retained the word, *Dichtung*, for instance, as the second synonym in a sentence to avoid repetition.

novel, letter or fragment. Thus, we might translate *Poesie* as ‘literature’, but remembering that it is beautiful literature, or literature perfused with the Romantic spirit. Even claiming that *Poesie* must be beautiful is misleading, because beauty is not essential to *Poesie*, unless beauty also includes sublimity, horror, quirkiness, the interesting, the bizarre, the ironic. Any of these may combine with the inner life of a text to elevate it to the level of *Poesie*. Indeed, Schlegel often reads as if these, rather than the physical fact of literature, are the constituents of *Poesie*.

Thus, as well as meaning ‘literature’, *Poesie* also means something like ‘the Romantic literary spirit’, or, more universally, ‘whatever it is that both makes art good, or makes the world into art’.

Es ist nicht nötig, daß irgend jemand sich bestrebe, etwa durch vernünftige Reden und Lehren die Poesie zu erhalten und fortzupflanzen, oder gar sie erst hervorzubringen, zu erfinden, aufzustellen und ihr strafende Gesetze zu geben, wie es die Theorie der Dichtkunst so gern möchte. Wie der Kern der Erde sich von selbst mit Gebilden und Gewächsen bekleidete, wie das Leben von selbst aus der Tiefe hervorsprang, und alles voll ward von Wesen die sich fröhlich vermehrten; so blüht auch Poesie von selbst aus der unsichtbaren Urkraft der Menschheit hervor, wenn der erwärmende Strahl der göttlichen Sonne sie betrifft und befruchtet.⁷

As this group of metaphors, also familiar from Hölderlin, suggest, we cannot be more specific about what makes *Poesie*. It grows organically, like a plant, like the earth itself, and like the growth of life from the sea.⁸ Schlegel alludes to both the first and second parts of Kant’s *Third Critique* here. Like the free play between imagination

⁷ Friedrich Schlegel, ‘Gespräch über die Poesie’, in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.166.

It is not necessary for anyone to exert themselves to nourish and propagate poetry by means of rational speeches and teachings, or even to produce it, invent it, assemble it and even to give it punitive laws, as the theory of poetic art would so much like to do. Just as the earth’s core dressed itself of its own accord with structures and vegetation, just as life leapt forth of itself from the deep, and everywhere was full of beings that joyously propagated themselves, so too does poetry bloom of its own accord out of the invisible elemental power of mankind, when the warming rays of the divine sun fall upon it and fertilise it.

⁸ This was according to the theory of Neptunism.

see, eg: Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002, p.366.

and understanding, poetry is structured without laws or theories. Rules of poetic composition are disparaged as despotic laws, punishable if transgressed. In addition, mechanistic natural laws are rejected in favour of organicism. Thus, spontaneity as freedom from the conceptual laws of the understanding, and organic growth as freedom from mechanical laws of nature come together in *Poesie*, and give expression to the very innermost essence of humanity.

In fact, the fragments and all Schlegel's essays can be seen as literary works.

He himself believed the critical works could be classed as literature. He tells us:

Poesie kann nur durch Poesie kritisiert werden. Ein Kunsturteil, welches nicht selbst ein Kunstwerk ist, entweder im Stoff, als Darstellung des notwendigen Eindrucks in seinem Werden, oder durch eine schöne Form, und einen im Geist der alten römischen Satire liberalen Ton, hat gar kein Bürgerrecht im Reiche der Kunst.⁹

Admittedly, the second sentence of this quotation merely states that criticism lacking literary qualities cannot expect to be regarded as art in its own right, but the first sentence implies that criticism should exhibit artistic qualities and be as much a work of art as the work it criticises. This belief reappears in the *Gespräch über die Poesie* (1800),

und so läßt sich auch eigentlich nicht reden von der Poesie als nur in Poesie.¹⁰

⁹ *Lyceums-Fragmente* no.117, in *KFSA*, Erste Abteilung: Kritische Neuausgabe, Band 2, München, Paderborn, Wien, Zürich 1967, p.162.

Literature can only be criticised by means of literature. An artistic judgement that is not itself a work of art, whether in its content, which is the way it reproduces the way the work gradually creates its necessary impression, or by being beautifully structured, using a liberal tone in the spirit of the ancient Roman satire, has no right to dwell in the kingdom of art.

see also: *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.439.

Jonathan Arac, 'The impact of Shakespeare', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Vol. 5, Romanticism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.288, agrees that Schlegel's main contribution to both literary art and criticism were the *Fragmente* and, especially, the *Characteristiken*.

¹⁰ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Gespräch über die Poesie', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.166.

Schiller's early dismissal of Schlegel, '...er bringt es nicht bis zur Klarheit und eben deswegen auch nicht zur Leichtigkeit in der Diktion. Ich finde doch, er hat zum Schriftsteller kein Talent.' (letter to Körner 4th July 1795), quoted in:

Indeed, our discussion of irony, below, shows that criticism fulfils most of the demands Schlegel makes of irony, that irony comes close to replacing beauty as the main aim and characteristic of Romantic literature, and thus, that criticism can legitimately be regarded as *Poesie*. All we have done so far in this chapter is explore a single term, but it is already apparent, that, in doing so, we have outlined Schlegel's literary theory in a compact form. The word *Poesie* encapsulated his new view of art and, especially, literature.

Irony

Schlegel's second key term is irony. During the late 1790s Schlegel regarded irony as the definitive sign of excellence in literature.

Die Philosophie ist die eigentliche Heimat der Ironie, welche man als logische Schönheit definieren möchte: denn überall wo in mündlich oder geschriebenen Gesprächen, und nur nicht ganz systematisch philosophiert wird, soll man Ironie leisten und fordern...¹¹

Thus, the Romantic Schlegel of 1797 has adapted his comments in the *Studium-Aufsatz*. There he advocated the revival of the aesthetic search for absolute beauty.

Philosophical drama, that conveyed some message to its audience, one of the characteristics identified as 'sentimental' by Schiller,¹² had merit but did not quite meet the criteria for great *Poesie*. Now the philosophical characteristics have been elevated as a kind of beauty, whereas 'aesthetic' is a virtually empty concept.¹³ As we

Josef Körner, *Romantiker und Klassiker: Die Brüder Schlegel in ihren Beziehungen zu Schiller und Goethe*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971, p.27.

Schiller's comments show either that Schlegel's written style improved, or that Schiller misjudged him.

Schlegel, in return, never liked Schiller's prose style. He compared it unfavourably with Fichte, as, 'stilisierte[n] Deklamationsübungen' - exercises in stylised declamation. (ibid. p.31.)

¹¹ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.42.

Philosophy is the real home of irony, which we might wish to define as logical beauty: for, wherever people are philosophising, in spoken or written conversations, but not quite systematically, we should be using and demanding irony...

¹² Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.72.

¹³ see *Lyceums-Fragment*, no. 40:

pointed out in our discussion of *Über Lessing*, Schlegel's rejection of the word 'aesthetic' might indicate his decision to concentrate on literary criticism rather than philosophy, but perhaps, too, that the word had degenerated into a contemporary 'buzz word', appealed to by populist writers, trying to defend shallow, pretentious texts or thinking.

Various pre-existing strands of meaning come together in Schlegel's term, 'irony'.¹⁴ He admired both rhetorical irony, as developed by the Roman writers Quintillian and Cicero,¹⁵ and ironic, socratic dialogue, that had an educational purpose. Rather than assuming that Socrates and Plato already knew the right answer well ahead of their students, which made Socratic dialogue a stylistic device, Schlegel believed Socrates to be barely one step ahead of his students, valuing their responses and genuinely using the dialogues to trigger his own ideas.¹⁶ Thus, Schlegel especially approved irony in the sense of an author's making, not a sarcastic negation, but a simultaneous dual assertion, to provide readers or an audience with a double

In der Deutschland erfunden und in Deutschland geltenden Bedeutung ist Ästhetisch ein Wort, welches wie bekannt eine gleich vollendete Unkenntnis der bezeichneten Sache und der bezeichnenden Sprache verrät. Warum wird es noch beibehalten?

'Aesthetic', in the meaning invented for it and current in Germany, is a word, which, as is well-known, betrays a perfect ignorance, equally of the matter to which it refers and of the language used in making that reference. Why do we still retain it?

Footnotes in the edition of Schlegel's collected works reveal that, when editing the *Studium-Aufsatz*, 'ästhetisch' was often amended to or used as a variant for 'künstlerisch'.

¹⁴ Alford identifies them in some detail, and much of the very abbreviated summary that follows in this paragraph is taken from:

Steven E. Alford, *Irony and the Romantic Imagination*, New York: Peter Lang, 1984, p.21ff.

¹⁵ Fred Rush, 'Irony and Romantic subjectivity', in (ed.) Nikolas Kompridis, *Philosophical Romanticism*, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006, p.193, fn.31.

Rush notes that this position is counter to that expressed by Paul de Man, 'The Concept of Irony', in (ed.) Andrzej Warminski, *Aesthetic Ideology*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, pp.163-184.

¹⁶ Ernst Behler, 'Early German Romanticism: Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis', in (ed.) Simon Critchley and William R. Schroeder, *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, Maldon MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p.80.

There might be a difference between the dialogues, as stylised representations written by Plato, that included only mono-syllabic or foolish contributions from Socrates' students, and the fuller, more exploratory conversations that actually took place.

perspective; that is, not as a criticism, but to introduce a perspective other than the protagonist's own, from which to judge him. This kind of stylistic irony provides 'the *Witz* and *Denkgesetz* of Romantic logic'. Together these strands make up Romantic irony, which creates or expresses 'the unity of the heterogeneous moments of a paradox', 'the simultaneity of the finite and the infinite',¹⁷ drawing attention to or hinting at two elements that apparently exist homogeneously, but whose synthesis is impossible, and pointing to literature's capacity to enact the impossibility of any human understanding of absolute truth. Irony is Schlegel's version of reciprocal determination.¹⁸

Ironie ist die Form des Paradoxen. Paradox ist alles, was zugleich gut und groß ist.¹⁹

The irresolvability of the paradox may lead to an infinite regress. Hegel described this aspect of Schlegel's thought as 'infinite, absolute negativity',²⁰ an unsurprising opinion, given Schlegel's interest in the Fichtean philosophy that Hegel rejected. To Schlegel, however, Romantic irony was both an essential quality of reality, and a sign of beauty, so no possibility of negativity arose. The regress was the '*endlose Reihe der Spiegel*'²¹ arising from our simultaneous awareness of and alternation among different, changing, incomplete views of the world. Irony permits us to acquire knowledge and understanding of what is around us, and it allows and generates open-

¹⁷ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.108.

Sie enthält und erregt ein Gefühl von dem unauflöslchen Widerstreit des Unbedingten und des Bedingten, der Unmöglichkeit und Notwendigkeit einer vollständigen Mitteilung.

It contains and excites a feeling for the irresolvable conflict between the unconditioned and the conditioned, the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication.

¹⁸ See Chapter 3 above for Schiller's use of this concept, and Chapter 7 above for Hölderlin.

¹⁹ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.48.

Irony is the Form of the paradox. Paradox is everything that is simultaneously great and good.

²⁰ Quoted in Steven E. Alford, *Irony and the Romantic Imagination*, New York: Peter Lang, 1984, p.21.

²¹ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.116.

endless succession of mirrors.

ended change and progress. Whereas Schiller gave us an image of two drives that resolved themselves into a third, the terms of Schlegel's ironic paradox are never completely resolved. Each ironic reflection feeds back into a fluid process of change.

Especially in Romantic writing, including Schlegel's own, irony can be an extended figure of speech or a complete work. Any text or discourse contains clues about its ironic nature, for example 'tone, discontinuity of character and statement, internal textual contradiction and so forth'... 'its ironic character is most often a function of context'.²² Thus, Schlegel's terse, allusive fragments derive from copious philosophical notebooks, while Plato's irony manipulated the apparently verbatim record of Socrates' teaching. Even Schlegel's desire to combine philosophy and poetic production is ironic, with its claim that the form in which philosophy is expressed has philosophical validity in itself.²³ Thus, a work with an ironical form that handles its content ironically expresses the paradoxical nature of reality, and suggests more to its readers than it could be interpreted as saying literally. Both explicitly and implicitly, Schlegelian irony expresses artistically the problematic relationship between finite creatures and the infinite, and is not merely a literary device, but is mandatory in any work or philosophical position.²⁴

However, as we might expect, remembering the unity and 'naïvety' so admired by Winckelmann, Schiller and other eighteenth century German commentators on Greek art, irony was not typical of the ancient world. Individual and society supposedly co-existed in a condition of immediate unity, so that writers naturally only had one viewpoint. Such unity allowed no distinction between what is

²² Steven E. Alford, *Irony and the Romantic Imagination*, New York: Peter Lang, 1984, p.21.

²³ Fred Rush, 'Irony and Romantic subjectivity', in (ed.) Nikolas Kompridis, *Philosophical Romanticism*, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006, p.173.

²⁴ Fred Rush, 'Irony and Romantic subjectivity', in (ed.) Nikolas Kompridis, *Philosophical Romanticism*, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006, p.180.

and what should be.²⁵ By contrast, as Schlegel had shown in the *Studium-Aufsatz*, modern writers were actively and self-consciously committed to forming something new and original out of an accumulated heritage of possible forms and contents, and were aware of tensions between themselves as individuals and their social context. They were thus also aware of the gap between the actual and the ideal. Essentially the writer, in Schlegel's age, was struggling, as Hölderlin also believed, to realise and reconcile these contrasts.²⁶ Modern writers inevitably operate from at least two viewpoints, that of the individual and that of their culture. Thus, although the terminology of irony is most typical of the *Lyceum* (1797) and *Athenäum* (1798), Schlegel's comments about the 'philosophical' nature of modern writing, and, especially, his discussions of 'philosophical' tragedy in the *Studium-Aufsatz* and *Über Lessing*, reveal the ironic tendencies in all modern literature.

Modern irony has two components, and their very co-existence has a paradoxical, ironical quality. The first is that every work has content and expresses a position. Content and position may be vague or in some ways indeterminate, depending on the work, but to a greater or lesser extent the work expresses insights, feelings, beliefs or philosophical propositions to which it is committed, just in the sense that they constitute its themes or content. Thus, one component of irony,

²⁵ Fred Rush, 'Irony and Romantic subjectivity', in (ed.) Nikolas Kompridis, *Philosophical Romanticism*, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006, p.180.

²⁶ eg. *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.22.

Ein Projekt ist der subjektive Keim eines werdenden Objekts. Ein vollkommenes Projekt müsste zugleich ganz subjektiv und ganz objektiv, ein unteilbares und lebendiges Individuum sein... Das Wesentliche ist die Fähigkeit, Gegenstände unmittelbar zugleich zu idealisieren, und zu realisieren, zu ergänzen, und teilweise in sich auszuführen. Da nur transzendental eben das ist, was auf die Verbindung oder Trennung des Idealen und des Realen Bezug hat; so könnte man wohl sagen, der Sinn für Fragmente und Projekte sei der transzendente Bestandteil des historischen Geistes.

A project is the subjective seed of an object that is coming into being. A perfect project would have to be simultaneously completely subjective and completely objective - an indivisible and living individual... The essential thing is the ability, immediately and all at once, to idealise, to realise, to amend, and partially achieve one's purposes. Since, then, it is precisely whatever has reference to the connection or separation between the ideal and the real that is transcendental, we could presumably say that the feeling for fragments and projects is the transcendental component of the historical spirit.

according to Schlegel, is that the work affirms the point of view expressed in it.²⁷ But the human condition has no single perspective on the absolute, and, through reflection, we can acknowledge how different the world may seem to other people. Every such perspective expresses something of the absolute. Once a writer is conscious of this, he registers within the work of art that in having a point of view, the work represents only one point of view among many attempts to express the absolute.²⁸ Hence Schlegel identified the second element in irony: a critical distance from the work is present within it. The totality of irony, therefore, is the co-existence within every single work of both critical distance and affirmation. This amounts also to a recognition that each work is only partial. It tells only part of the truth, and is biased towards a particular view.²⁹ At the same time, we can relate this explanation to Kant's position. Schlegel has reinterpreted disinterested observation, the Kantian presumption that everyone will agree with the judgement of taste, as the ability to acknowledge viewpoints other than one's own, despite one's in-built, tacitly asserted bias.

We also can see here how closely Schlegel associates the terms 'irony' and 'philosophical'. Schlegel's Fichtean references to reflection and hovering, and his

²⁷ Fred Rush, 'Irony and Romantic subjectivity', in (ed.) Nikolas Kompridis, *Philosophical Romanticism*, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006, p.181.

²⁸ Elizabeth Millàn-Zaibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy*, Albany: SUNY, 2007, p.170.

She identifies the way the chaos of irony and wit can provide an approximation of the Absolute as the main difference between Schlegel and idealist colleagues, who were 'hoping to get a transparent look at the Absolute'. I presume she is mainly referring to the differences between Schlegel and his friend, Schelling.

²⁹ Fred Rush, 'Irony and Romantic subjectivity', in (ed.) Nikolas Kompridis, *Philosophical Romanticism*, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006, p.181.

Although, following Rush, I have used the word 'perspective' in this discussion, Rush also admits that Schlegel does not ever appear to have used that word himself. I agree with him that 'point of view' and 'perspective' can nevertheless effectively be regarded as synonymous.

references to the necessity for and difficulties of complete communication³⁰ gain their coherence from this definition of irony. Schlegel, unlike Schiller or later writers, such as Hegel, never expected to be able to synthesise the opposing or various terms that characterised art into a stable equilibrium. However, as seen in the *Studium-Aufsatz*, he did believe that clashes and differences created change and even progress. The theory of irony is part of a gradually articulated dialectical theory. The definite content of the work of art constantly conflicts and co-exists with the fact that its content is not definitive, and thus irony and life both form significant features of the work of art. From unavoidable ironic clash springs the 'life' of the work of art, and from this comes the impetus towards further attempts to represent the absolute, and from this again comes open-ended literary change and development. Schlegel's 1800-1801 Philosophy lecture notes confirmed that he had developed a theory of dialectical progress in history. There he stated that irony is the synthesis of all the antitheses in which the individual character of both constituents - ie. the definite content and the fact that it is not definitive - is preserved and enhanced. We are forever striving to comprehend an unspecifiable total context - which would presumably be capable of resolving all the perceived inconsistencies of our many points of view - that remains forever beyond our reach.³¹

Irony is not just an obvious feature of the texts of modern literature. It is vital also to the reader's engagement with these texts, as he or she brings his or her own many experiences and points of view to every reading of a work. By extension, it also explains Schlegel's exhortations that we should read and re-read works - chew the cud

³⁰Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über die Unverständlichkeit', in Eichner, Hans, (ed.), *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Vol.2, Part I: Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796 - 1801), Paderborn; Munich; Vienna: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Zürich: Thomas-Verlag, 1967, p.370.

³¹ Referred to in Fred Rush, 'Irony and Romantic subjectivity', in (ed.) Nikolas Kompridis, *Philosophical Romanticism*, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006, p.189.

(*wiederkauen*)³² - so that we can reflect repeatedly on the writer's layers of awareness and irony, and bring fresh points of view to each subsequent reading. Our ability to do this effectively would naturally seem to depend partly on our own level of sensitivity to the possibilities in the text or, in Schiller's terms,³³ to our mind's being undetermined, yet full of possibility and content.³⁴ The theory of irony thus justifies Schlegel's creation of *Charakteristiken* as carefully structured, perceptive and illuminating readers' guides, supplementing our appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the works we read, and giving him and us the opportunity to put the ironic self-awareness he advocated and observed into practice. Indeed, Schlegel's criticism was more successful than his imaginative works, such as *Lucinde* or the poetry. *Lucinde* is supremely ironic, full of reflection, temporal discontinuities and narrative changes.³⁵ It contains relatively little action and does not achieve closure. However, it is debatable whether it hangs together as a whole, or whether readers would be able to enjoy it as a work of art, rather than as a step-by-step experiment to be studied.

A recurrent objection to Romanticism has been its egocentrism. Romantic works have a generalised reputation for focusing either on the author or artist as autobiographical subject, or on an excessively self-reflecting or egocentric protagonist.³⁶ Irony as such, however, need not entail a self-centred approach. Ironic

³² *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no. 27.

³³ see chapter 4 above.

³⁴ David Simpson, *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry*, London: Macmillan, 1979, pp.178, 179.

³⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde*, (ed.) Karl Konrad Polheim, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1999. Originally published 1799.

³⁶ For instance, John William Scholl, 'Schlegel and Goethe, 1792 – 1801: A Study in Early German Romanticism', in *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, vol.21, no.1, 1906, p.148, believed that, for Goethe's 'das Subjekt scheint Recht haben', Schlegel substituted, 'Das Subjekt hat Recht'.

Wordsworth's 'lonely as a cloud' musings, de Quincy's *Confessions*, Schlegel's Julius in *Lucinde*, Wackenroder's *Ergießungen*, and even Hölderlin's *Hyperion* and Goethe's own *Werther*, fall foul of

layers of composition are present, whatever the subject matter. For instance, Schlegel's authorial interjections in his *Charakteristiken* serve both to focus the reader's attention on the works or writers under discussion, and to remind him or her that a *Charakteristik* imparts only a second hand appreciation of the work; it encourages the reader to move on, and read or re-read the work for him or herself. *Tristram Shandy*, also admired by Schlegel as a modern, ironic novel, although not a product of Romanticism, is not egocentric. While the novel is self-aware, its characters are not excessively self-analytical, and it is packed with action. Indeed, if we follow Belgardt, lively action is a vital element in the inner life of Romantic literature.³⁷

Nevertheless, Schlegel's encouragement of visible authorial intervention, and his emphasis on an explicit consciousness of ambiguity and ambivalence permitted egocentrism. In practical terms, constant reflection on and hovering (*schweben*) between two or more aspects of reality involved introspection.³⁸ However, Schlegel's

this observation. Prompted by Schlegel's admiration for *Hamlet*, we might even include Shakespeare among the guilty parties.

³⁷ Raimond Belgardt, "Romantische Poesie" in Friedrich Schlegels Aufsatz Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie', in *The German Quarterly*, vol.40, no.2, March 1967, p.176.

³⁸ Perhaps we may even detect this fear in Schiller and Goethe's reference to Fichte as '*das große Ich*'. (letter Schiller to Goethe, 06.07.1795).

(ed.) Philipp Stein, *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe in den Jahren 1794 bis 1805*, Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, no date.

This was not just a comment on how closely the man matched his metaphysics, but on the further possibility that the new Idealism would do more than analyse the nature of knowledge and perception; it might also change the way people thought of the world and their experience of it. To use a late twentieth century expression, it might create a 'me generation' (Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me: Why today's young Americans are more confident, assertive, entitled - and more miserable than ever before*, New York: Simon and Shuster Free Press, 2006.).

see also Letter Schiller to Goethe 28.10.1794,

'Die Welt ist nur ein Ball, den das Ich geworfen hat und den es bey der Reflexion wieder fängt!! Sonach hätte er seine Gottheit wirklich declariert, wie wir neulich erwarteten.'

The world is only a ball that the I has thrown and then catches again by means of reflection!! So, according to this, he really seems to have announced his own divinity, as we were expecting recently.

Schiller's summary of the Fichtean philosophy is completely unfair, but the quotation gives a good insight into Schiller's and Goethe's malicious assessment of Fichte's personal egoism.

continued allusions to Plato and his return near the end of the century to an earlier interest in Spinoza,³⁹ make it unlikely that his own philosophy remained subjectivist, or grounded in the metaphysical *Ich / Nicht-Ich* of Fichte.⁴⁰ He acknowledged the danger of self-absorbed works,⁴¹ as a source of ‘coarse, egotistical titillation’.⁴² He questioned the motivations behind autobiography,⁴³ but also noted that Romantic *Poesie* was the best way of expressing the writer’s inner thoughts completely. Some writers, he believed, though merely intending to write a novel, instead created a representation of themselves.⁴⁴

³⁹ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, p.77.

⁴⁰ Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: the struggle against subjectivism*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, p.12.

Beiser agrees that Schlegel’s absolute did not originate from the *Ich*, even though the *Ich* was the highest form in which the absolute is expressed.

⁴¹ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no. 116.

⁴² *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no. 118.

Es ist nicht einmal ein feiner, sondern eigentlich ein recht **grober Kitzel des Egoismus**, wenn alle Personen in einem Roman sich um Einen bewegen wie Planeten um die Sonne, der dann gewöhnlich des Verfassers unartiges Schoßkind ist...

It is not even a fine, but actually a really **coarse egotistical titillation**, if all the people in a novel circle like planets round the sun round one individual, who is then usually the author’s naughty spoilt child...

⁴³ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.196.

⁴⁴ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.116.

Witz

Besides irony, *Poesie* has *Witz*. In the *Fragmente* Schlegel provides some tantalising partial definitions of the concept, which do not all fit together easily. In general, *Witz* seems closer to the English word ‘wit’, a kind of humorous irony, than to the modern German word, a joke.⁴⁵ Usually it seems to mean any kind of quick-wittedness that draws creative inferences and makes useful and illuminating mental connections. This could occur during literary creativity, but was also valuable in science and philosophy, where the ability to interpret fresh data or formulate a hypothesis does not always depend on painstaking, mechanical or logical activity, but emerges as a bright idea or sudden understanding. It is, he said, as if the ideas linked by *Witz* are two old friends who have a surprise reunion after a long separation.⁴⁶ Schlegel gives a metaphorical analysis of how a *witzige Einfall* (a witty idea) comes about. The thinker is suddenly able to separate out mental content that was previously intermingled, but his imagination must already have become completely stuffed (*bis zur Sättigung*) with all kinds of lively thoughts. Then, at the right moment, the imagination is electrified by the friction of social interaction, and the slightest friendly or hostile contact elicits sparks of lightening and glowing rays, or, on the other hand, shattering blows.⁴⁷ It is an explosion of the confined psyche,⁴⁸ again emphasising the prerequisite of a mind so full of ideas and information that connections begin to form involuntarily. However, the power of *Witz* must not be abused, or it becomes unsociable, capable of silencing any conversation with its crushing strength.⁴⁹ Using it

⁴⁵ I propose to use the English word ‘wit’ or the German word *Witz* interchangeably in this context, but bearing in mind that this is permissible only if discussing Schlegel. In Schlegel, *Witz* is undeniably a piece of technical terminology.

⁴⁶ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no. 37.

⁴⁷ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.34.

⁴⁸ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.90.

⁴⁹ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.394.

as a tool for revenge, especially, is disgraceful, comparable to using art to prurient ends.⁵⁰

Schlegel provides many other brief insights into his use of the word *Witz*, but we shall discuss only a few, to give an impression of what he valued in Romantic literature. Schlegel unsurprisingly warns us against trying to be *witzig*. The result would be false and wooden, *Witzelei*, like the classical French alexandrine, probably his most detested style of artificial formalism.⁵¹ It must be spontaneous, and risks being extinguished immediately by a single analytical word, however well meant.⁵² Thus, the content expressed wittily could be presented in a more lengthy, mundane way after intense intellectual labour,⁵³ but it would not be grasped so immediately. Indeed, Schlegel describes reason (*Vernunft*), as we usually think of it, as being only thin and watery. There is a special thick, fiery kind of reason that makes wit what it is, and gives genuine style its elasticity and electricity.⁵⁴ When Schlegel said of Lessing that he wrote:

Worte, in denen, was die dunkelsten Stellen sind im Gebiet des menschlichen Geistes, oft wie vom Blitz plötzlich erleuchtet...⁵⁵

it is therefore surprising that he did not use the word *Witz*.

⁵⁰ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.51.

⁵¹ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no. 32.

⁵² *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.22.

Ein einziges analytisches Wort, auch zum Lobe, kann den vortrefflichsten witzigen Einfall, dessen Flamme nun erst wärmen sollte, nachdem sie gegläntzt hat, unmittelbar löschen.

⁵³ See also Schlegel's comments on the contrast Bodmer made between Homer (ie. lengthy) and Aristophanes (ie. witty), in *Lyceums-Fragment*, no.13.

⁵⁴ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.104.

Was man gewöhnlich Vernunft nennt, ist nur eine Gattung derselben; nämlich die dünne und wäßrige. Es gibt auch eine dicke, feurige Vernunft, welche den Witz eigentlich zum Witz macht, und dem gediegenen Styl das Elastische gibt und das Elektrische.

⁵⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Lessing', in (ed.) Andreas Huyssen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.60.

Words by which the darkest places in the territory of the human mind are illuminated, often as if by lightning...

From this we gain some idea of how Schlegel also thought *Witz* linked with urbanity,⁵⁶ prima facie a superficial form of sociability to be approved by a philosopher, but relevant to the apparent lack of detailed philosophical discussion in Schlegel's works. He states that the One and All of historical philosophy, and Plato's highest form of music, are the wit of harmonious universality. This amounts to a rare public showing of Schlegel's Spinozan worldview in the last years of the eighteenth century.⁵⁷ Apart from his use of the word *Witz*, the sentiment in this fragment might have been written by Hölderlin. Yet it also illustrates how differently Hölderlin and Schlegel handled similar philosophical sources and material. The very word, *Witz*, is part of this contrast. Hölderlin's work exhibits earnestness and intensity. He struggles to express what he believes to be inexpressible, and turns to the simultaneously vivid yet partially veiled medium of poetry in order to both resolve and acknowledge the difficulty. Schlegel, however, devoted himself to avoiding earnestness, despite his diligent re-reading and annotation of the literary and philosophical canon. He presented a polished, flippant face to the world. Writing is an ironic activity underpinned by layers of other activity, such as intentionality, form, content, editing and research. The writer presents his world selectively, as he chooses.⁵⁸ To use a mechanical metaphor, his readership does not need to hear all the wheels of his creative machinery grinding, however marvellous the technology. Alternatively, to use a chemical metaphor, all the reader needs to see is a puff of smoke, and a sparkling crystal - a fragment. Socially the urbane man is the sparkling crystal, the

⁵⁶ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.438.

⁵⁷ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2003, pp.77, 131.

⁵⁸ Though Hölderlin also emphasised the rapid, knowing choices made by the skilled writer. See: J. Chr. F. Hölderlin, 'Über die verschiedene Arten zu dichten', in (ed.) Johann Kreuzer, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Theoretische Schriften*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, p.31.

See chapter 9 above.

counterpart of the literary fragment, and thus, the most developed example of the *Witz* of harmonious universality, as Schlegel says.⁵⁹ At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that both urbanity and harmony are a fragile, beautiful, but brittle crust on a seething and basically incomprehensible reality.⁶⁰

The chemical metaphor is Schlegel's own. A later, epigrammatic fragment uses a scientific metaphor to hint at the relationship of *Witz* to the human faculties:

Verstand ist mechanischer, Witz ist chemischer, Geist ist organischer Geist.⁶¹

Thus, we can study the creaking, mechanical workings of the understanding, but we cannot at base explain why two distinct elements give rise to the particular compound we call *Witz*. We know only that they infallibly do so. The mind as a whole, meanwhile, is like a changing, living thing. Also described as being chemical and witty are the French, the novel, and a list of recent phenomena that Schlegel found exciting.⁶² These connotations of explosiveness and revolution combine to characterise contemporary Europe. Like Fichte,⁶³ Schlegel thought the scholar was engaged in a creative process. Each new academic insight was comparable with the work of an artist.

⁵⁹ I would suspect that sociability occupies the same place in Schlegel's thought as the communal soul does in Hölderlin's. It is an acknowledgement that by making a small, imperfect personal contribution, we build up and benefit from a larger, fuller understanding.

⁶⁰ Perhaps Schlegel's approval of urbanity should not really be surprising. He alludes to its being a stoic virtue in *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no 42:

... und sogar die Stoiker hielten die Urbanität für eine Tugend.

⁶¹ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.366.

⁶² *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.426.

Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002, p.88. Henrich discusses the influence the Stoic philosophers had on the development of post-Kantian idealism. It is therefore possible that Schlegel may be alluding in this fragment to the Stoic theory of chemical mixtures, important in the make up of conscious beings, and in the union of *hen panta* - as the Stoics called the One. [cf. Hölderlin's *en kai pan*.]

⁶³ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 'Vocation of a scholar', in *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and other writings, 1797-1800*, (ed.) (tr.) Daniel Breazeale, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994.

Witz fulfils spontaneously the analytical and synthetical functions of logical and scientific argument.⁶⁴ A definition must always be witty, and, if it requires explanation, is self-defeating and obscure. Yet it cannot be made up on the spur of the moment, since scientific definition cannot take place until a great deal of other work has been carried out. Presumably, this means that enough factual information must be amassed before making any rash statements. In art theory the many laboured attempts at tabulation and categorisation have their uses, as tests of virtuosity, for example, but, Schlegel suggests, unless they can be seen immediately to be true, they explain nothing. For him the important thing is to know something, and then to say it. All other attempts to explain or elaborate are superfluous, lacking the simultaneous simplicity and profoundness of *Witz*, rich in content, simple in form.

This brings us to Schlegel's view of Kant. *Witz* is the difference between representation according to the rule, and simply acting.⁶⁵ The one is apparently so much more facile than the other, but, not only do both achieve the same end, but spontaneous action, like wit or rapid mental arithmetic, is a kind of short cut that avoids superfluous theorising. Leibnitz especially, but even Kant, were *witzig*. Their ability to combine ideas together meant that their most important discoveries came together in a surprisingly coincidental way. The content of what they said was indeed greater than anything that could be conveyed in the ephemeral terms of poetic wit, but Leibnitz's whole philosophy is made up originally of a collection of witty fragments and projects. Philosophy then progresses by applying a sound method to these insights.⁶⁶ Content and ideas precede witty connections; then methodical structure,

⁶⁴ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.82.

⁶⁵ This reminds us of the theme of *Anmut und Würde*, where spontaneous conformity to duty is so much more attractive than a protracted effort to fulfil one's duty. See chapter 2 above.

⁶⁶ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.220.

important though it is, follows – even in Kant.⁶⁷ Schlegel has undoubtedly written these words intending to rouse controversy. As the master of methodical structure, Kant is the last writer one would expect to call witty.

Since wit brings out surprising connections, metaphors and analogies would seem to be a likely source of wit. Kant's two most famous uses of imagery occur in the *Third Critique*, in his analogies, firstly, in his emblematic representation of Juno by the peacock, and Jupiter by the thunderbolt of majesty,⁶⁸ and secondly, between despotic government and a hand-mill, and a constitutional government and an organic body.⁶⁹ Neither example points to Kant's having had a lively, literary way of thinking, capable of illuminating our understanding in a fresh way. Similarly, in the *First Critique* Kant refers to the 'country of truth... surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean...',⁷⁰ probably adapted from a familiar eighteenth century metaphor,⁷¹ but, once again, an isolated example rather than evidence of a misjudged reputation. However, I would suggest Schlegel did not find Kant witty in any amusing or allusive sense. More plausibly, Kant's flash of wit lay in his ability to conceive for the first time of analysing the human mind in the way that has become accepted as a basic model, even if often revised since then. It took Kant many years and volumes to explain his philosophical conception exactly, and to show that other areas of thought - for example, aesthetics - were consistent with this original insight; but the insight itself

⁶⁷ By implication, this gives us an insight into the *Fragmente*. For years Schlegel kept meticulous philosophical notebooks that cannot be summarised or assessed in the space available here, but the Fragments would never have been produced without them.

⁶⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 5:315, p.193.

⁶⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 5:352, p.226.

⁷⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (ed.) trans. F. Max Müller, Garden City NY: Anchor Doubleday Inc., 1966, A236, B295, p.187.

⁷¹ Rebecca Kukla, 'Introduction', in (ed.) Rebecca Kukla, *Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant's Critical Philosophy*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.1.

was, nevertheless, unique and illuminating, and thus in Schlegel's terms, witty.

Presumably, too, we may surmise that Schlegel thought Kant had handled his analytical comments skilfully enough not to have destroyed his wittiness.⁷²

Yet there is some tension here in the way Schlegel typifies *Witz* as an aesthetic (ie. poetic) concept. Whereas his usual theme is apparently the need to be aware of, and even to unpeel the layers of irony present in any artistic work, *Witz* appears to arise in either the absence or the complete concealment of technique and analysis. If it is indeed an unanalysable and finished result, then *Witz* shares some characteristics with the perfect, classical model, whose beauty and completeness is contemplated and appreciated without conceptualisation. The effect of this could be to set up a further set of tensions within the work of the artist and in his or her relationship with a public. We can imagine the artist, using the kinds of balancing skills outlined by Hölderlin, deciding when to reveal and when to conceal the working of the poetic imagination. Thus, sometimes the enigmatic or illuminating flash of *Witz*, and at other times the spell-breaking effects achieved by revealing the ironic structure of a work will make equally important contributions to the *Poesie* of Romantic art, and it would be the reader's job to detect them. It would be almost as if the value of the work of art arose from this additional, knowing series of counter-plays between writer and reader. Whether Schlegel's ingenuity genuinely extended so far as to have intended this implication of his definition of *Witz*, it is hard to say, but it shows how even he was unable to eliminate the Kantian element of immediate and non-conceptual perception from the apparently self-conscious diversity of the best *Poesie*.

⁷² As Schlegel had warned in *Lyceums-Fragmente*, 22, referred to above.

Romantisch and Roman

The terms examined so far are features of Schlegel's Romanticism. Yet, although Schlegel praises *romantische Poesie* above all other kinds of art, there has even been uncertainty about what he meant by Romantic. By 1797, having established the method of criticism used in the *Charakteristiken*, he needed a critical vocabulary to discuss the works he and his associates valued.⁷³ His own *Studium-Aufsatz* may have complicated his choice, by contributing to the pejorative force associated with words like, 'characteristic', 'interesting' and 'didactic'.⁷⁴ The term 'modern' was rejected as a term of approbation, since it included many *falsche Tendenzen*, (false starts), and a large amount of inferior modern work that he hoped would turn out to be a false start. However, once Schlegel had chosen the terms *Roman* and *romantisch*, he used them without any sustained public discussion of their usage. Some contemporaries were confused, objected to them or misused them, a failure of communication that affected his reputation as a professional writer.⁷⁵ For instance, one of the connotations of the word, 'romantic' familiar in our own times is the notion of over-sentimentality, or, colloquially, slushiness, which Schlegel too was aware of:

Die Romane endigen gern, wie das Vaterunser anfängt; mit dem Reich Gottes auf Erden.⁷⁶

He thus sometimes uses the word *Roman*, as here, in a disparaging sense, despite also identifying it with the epitome of Romantic *Poesie*.⁷⁷

⁷³ Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.49.

⁷⁴ A.O. Lovejoy, 'On the Meaning of "Romantic" in Early German Romanticism, Part II', in *Modern Language Notes*, Vol.32, No.2, Feb 1917, p.76.

⁷⁵ Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.50.

⁷⁶ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no.18.

Novels like to end like the beginning of the Lord's Prayer - with the Kingdom of God upon earth.

Or more familiarly and in secular terminology: cheap, popular novels end with a 'happily ever after'.

⁷⁷ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The theory of literature in German Romanticism*, (ed.) (tr.) Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1988, Preface, p.4.

More generally, by *Romantisch*, Schlegel distinguished good modern literature. His choice of word was influenced by other existing meanings, some of which he had partially exempted from criticism, in the *Studium-Aufsatz*, for instance, those relating to Old French and other romances of wandering knights or troubadours; vernacular writings in rhyme rather than classical metre, and the kinds of exotic, improbable and (more disparagingly) absurd events that might occur in mediaeval romance or folk tale.⁷⁸ Thus, for him the word already called up a lively tradition that contrasted with the formalism of classical French literature.⁷⁹ Indeed, before coining his new usage, he commented on how *Hamlet* combined all the charming bloom of romantic fantasy.⁸⁰ The term ‘romantic fantasy’, had been his final editorial decision. A previous version had read, ‘era of knights and heroes’.⁸¹ What gave cohesion to this former romantic age was its rich mythology.⁸² Significantly, Schlegel returns to this notion in the *Gespräch über die Poesie*, where Ludovico advocates, unchallenged, the development of a new mythology for the modern age.⁸³

Friedrich Schlegel, ‘Gespräch über die Poesie: Brief über den Roman’, in (ed.) Andreas Huysen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.206.

⁷⁸ Hans Eichner, *Friedrich Schlegel*, New York: Twayne, 1970, p.52.

⁷⁹ *Studium-Aufsatz*, p.226.

Raimund Belgardt, ‘“Romantische Poesie” in Friedrich Schlegels Aufsatz “Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie”’, in *The German Quarterly*, vol.40, No.2, Mar. 1967, p.169.

⁸⁰ *Studium-Aufsatz*, p.249.

...vereinigen sich die reizenden Blüten der Romantischen Phantasie...

⁸¹ *Studium-Aufsatz*, fn. p.249.

‘Helden und Ritterzeit’

⁸²This aspect of the era of knights and heroes was referred to in: *Studium-Aufsatz*, p.226.

Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy*, Albany: SUNY, 2007, p.165. She repeats Schlegel’s point about myth and social cohesion, in order to defend Schlegel against claims that by advocating myth he also promoted mysticism.

Interestingly, she also points out the way this view of myth sets a limit on Schlegel’s supposed preference for discontinuity and lack of resolution. While he accepted clash and paradox in belief systems, Schlegel advocated cohesion in the social world, and promoted mythology as a means of achieving this.

⁸³ Friedrich Schlegel, ‘Gespräch über die Poesie: Rede über die Mythologie’, in (ed.) Andreas Huysen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.192.

Developing the conception of the Romantic simplified Schlegel's response to some of the writers he had always admired, but for whom he constructed excuses in the *Studium-Aufsatz*, and gave us a critical standard for judging past writers. Petrarch now became a Romantic poet, not a lyrical poet, ranked with Dante, Shakespeare and Cervantes as one of the greatest Romantic poets.⁸⁴ Lyricism, as Schlegel had already pointed out, was the *Poesie* of ancient Greece, its culturally best-suited form. We infer that, although we may unscrupulously imitate past genres, only the work that grows from its surrounding culture has integrity. The organic metaphor of growth is an indication of Schlegel's approval.⁸⁵ Hence, the ancient writers who have an enduring appeal are the most Romantic.⁸⁶ Aristophanes was one of Schlegel's favourite classical writers, and it was his bantering tone (*Persiflage*),⁸⁷ his humour and irony that he admired most. Modern Romanticism is like a single filament from Athena's gauzy fabric,⁸⁸ spun out so that it reaches down to us.⁸⁹ Thus, self-analysis is only

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The theory of literature in German Romanticism*, (ed.) (tr.) Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1988, p.89.

The authors explain how closely the protagonists in the *Gespräch* can be identified with the members of the Jena circle. Ludovico, for example, is Schelling. However, they also acknowledge Ayrault's contention that it is misleading to regard the characters as members of the *Athenäum* group.

Ludovico believes idealism is the central core from which a shared story of the nature and meaning of reality will grow, capable of embracing activities as diverse as *Poesie* and physics. It is understandable that he has been identified with Schelling.

⁸⁴ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Gespräch über die Poesie: Epochen der Dichtkunst', in (ed.) Andreas Huysen, *Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische und theoretische Schriften*, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997, p.178.

⁸⁵ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no. 119.

In this fragment Schlegel also remarks on the emotional exhibitionism of poets who affect to be lyrical, counter to their cultural background; this makes an interesting counterfoil to our previous comments about self-indulgent Romantic heroes.

⁸⁶ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.153.

⁸⁷ Schlegel uses apparently dismissive words, such as *Persiflage* and *Buffonerie* even when writing of work that he admires. He was well aware of the flippant and even facetious dimensions of Romantic irony.

⁸⁸ *Leichtigkeit*, a synonym for *Persiflage*, was the word used to refer to indecently diaphanous fabrics. Another layer of Schlegelian irony.

⁸⁹ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.154.

artistically effective if unaffected and coming genuinely from the heart, not from the calculations of opportunistic career poets applying a self-aggrandising formula.⁹⁰

Athenäums-Fragment 116 appears to define ‘*romantische Poesie*’. However, it is best understood in conjunction with Schlegel’s other critical works. The first sentence is the most famous:

Die romantische Poesie ist eine progressive Universalpoesie.⁹¹

Romantic *Poesie* is progressive, in that it is indeterminate in the manner first introduced to us in the *Studium-Aufsatz*, namely, in that it grows from its society, helps define that society, and, also, contributes towards changes in society. The constant feedback between art and life is an aspect of change and part of the means by which change takes place. Schlegel did not expect a position of final closure to be reached, for, as he says later in this fragment, the true essence of romantic poetry is that it is eternally in a process of becoming, and can never be completed.⁹² The Romantic condition of constant becoming is the evidence of the ‘inner life’ that we saw above was essential to all true *Poesie*. Again, the implied meaning of this fragment refers back to the *Studium-Aufsatz*. According to A.O. Lovejoy’s influential suggestion, in this Fragment Schlegel reversed the opinions expressed in the *Studium-Aufsatz*, rejected neo-classicism and contemplative aesthetic beauty, and applied the designation ‘Romantic *Poesie*’ to work of which he had previously disapproved.⁹³

⁹⁰ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no. 49, 67.

English writers, motivated by *Guineen* (guineas), come out of this comparison especially poorly.

⁹¹ This long fragment is referred to repeatedly in the work of Schlegel’s commentators. This opening sentence is a good illustration of *Witz* at work. It is a pithy definition that makes no sense unless the reader has already done some groundwork to find out what Schlegel had written already. Once we understand what he means, it is quite a neat definition. This is either clever or self-defeating. Certainly ironic.

⁹² *Athenäums-Fragmente*, 116.

Die romantische Dichtart ist noch im Werden; ja das ist ihr eigentliches Wesen, daß sie ewig nur werden, nie vollendet kann.

⁹³ A.O. Lovejoy, ‘On the Meaning of “Romantic” in Early German Romanticism, Part II’, in *Modern Language Notes*, Vol.32, No.2, Feb 1917, p. 72.

Although Lovejoy highlights the similarities between Romantic *Poesie* and ideas Schlegel had rejected in the *Studium-Aufsatz*, more telling is Schlegel's comment in the *Studium-Aufsatz*: '*Das Romantische bleibt ewig neu - das Moderne wechselt mit der Mode.*' Even in 1795 Schlegel had discerned good and bad in both ancient and modern. Thus, taken with *Fragment 116*, if it is eternally new, then, equally, it is progressing universally. The term 'Romantic' brought this out more clearly.⁹⁴

However, Schlegel had changed in other ways since the *Studium-Aufsatz*. There the cultural origins of art made it local or relative in character. Romanticism, by contrast, has escaped from these limitations. The fragmentation of modern cultural life has multiplied the possibilities open to the creative artist, to such an infinite degree that its very individuality, its independence from the constraints of genre, its ability to explore the endless realms of the interesting and the bizarre, have freed art from its particularities. It has become universal in the sense of being timeless, and quite possibly also, in the sense of having been able to abandon specific cultural determinations. When Schlegel later uses the term 'transcendental poetry',⁹⁵ this is perhaps what we should take him to mean. *Poesie* has risen above or gone beyond the particular, and made itself universal. This is a sense in which Romantic *Poesie* is '*Poesie der Poesie*'.⁹⁶ It is a distillation of all that is essentially poetic, the poetry of whatever is poetic. Furthermore, we hear an echo of the Platonic Forms in this way of describing the achievements of Early Romanticism. The Romantics believed they had explored the limitations of the hitherto earthly manifestations of *Poesie*, and, through the operation of feeling, imagination, reason, which all go to make up *Witz*, had grasped the Form of art, and learned to recognise the intrinsic beauty of both human

⁹⁴ Raimund Belgardt, "'Romantische Poesie" in Friedrich Schlegels Aufsatz "Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie"', in *The German Quarterly*, vol.40, No.2, Mar. 1967, p.180.

⁹⁵ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, 247.

⁹⁶ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, 247.

art and the created world. It is important that we have established a likely meaning for *universal* in this context, because it rescues Schlegel from the charge of inconsistency. In the *Studium-Aufsatz*, Schlegel was advocating an ideal, in the old sense, unsullied by the irregularities of particularity. Thus, when we refer to the *Studium-Aufsatz*, we can also use Platonic terms, and say he was valuing the universal over the particular. *Fragment 116* would exhibit a strong tension between his admiration for the variety of Romantic *Poesie* and his continued claim of universality, if he had not revised his view of what constitutes universality. Therefore by considering what he meant by *Universalpoesie* we also grasp his revised view of what can legitimately be regarded - in the widest and most inclusive sense - as beautiful.

The rest of *Fragment 116* expands on these ideas of beauty as variety. We find out that romantic *Poesie* does not just combine all the poetic genres and join with philosophy and rhetoric, but mixes and melds brilliance, criticism, literary poetry and folk poetry. While it includes all the various systems and sub-systems of poetic composition, it also includes the artless song that a child has made up. Romantic *Poesie* works like a mirror held up to the world around us or to our own age. It thus has a powerful mimetic function, but either of the same naïve kind as Schiller thought he observed in Shakespeare, or as in the successfully reconciled work of Schiller's great sentimental writer, who has been led back to nature.⁹⁷ Romantic *Poesie* also can hold back from mirroring the world, and be completely indeterminate and non-specific, as one might expect from *Universalpoesie*.

Und doch kann sie am meisten zwischen dem Dargestellten und dem Darstellenden, frei von allem realen und idealen Interesse auf den Flügeln der poetischen Reflexion in der Mitte schweben, diese Reflexion immer mehr potenzieren und wie in einer endlosen Reihe von Spiegeln vervielfachen.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naïve and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981, p.63.

⁹⁸ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, 116.

This extract, especially the phrase ‘endless succession of mirrors’, is a commonly quoted phrase from Schlegel’s work, a vivid and suggestive image, worth quoting again, because of its context. Schlegel is indeed praising Romantic *Poesie* for its capacity to set an endless train of indeterminate ironical thought in motion, but he is specifically not presenting this as its entire purpose or nature. As we have just seen, he is setting up an antithesis between the mimetic and reflective aspects of art, and claiming that Romantic art can and does embrace them both.

Sie ist der höchsten und der allseitigsten Bildung fähig; nicht bloß von innen heraus, sondern auch von außen hinein.⁹⁹

This is the sentence that follows the previous quotation, and it could effectively be taken to confirm that Schlegel saw art as capable of being simultaneously, and equally legitimately, conscious, structured, expressive, representational, instinctual, social and personal. All these characteristics are hinted at or named at some point in this fragment. *Fragment 116* is enormously ambitious in the claims it makes for Romantic *Poesie*. No theory can ever do it justice; it is the only kind of *Poesie* that is truly endless and free; its primary law is that the whim of the poet, with a power far beyond that of Kantian genius, tolerates no superior law. Then the final sentence brings us to our almost outrageous destination: Only the Romantic literary genre is more than a genre and is also literary art itself, so that in a certain sense, all *Poesie* either is or ought to be Romantic.¹⁰⁰ Unsurprisingly, therefore, even eccentric or monstrous

And yet it can in the highest degree hover on the wings of poetic reflection in the middle, between the represented thing and the way it is being represented, free of all actual or idealised involvement. It can raise this reflection to a higher and higher power, and multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors.

(Note that Schlegel is using a mathematical metaphor here. *Potenzieren* suggests raising a number to a higher power, *vervielfachen* is to multiply, and *Reihe* is also the word for a mathematical series or, in this case, a regression.)

⁹⁹ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, 116.

It is capable of the highest and most multi-faceted cultivation, not only from the inside out, but also from the outside inwards.

¹⁰⁰ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, 116.

literary anomalies have value, so long as they are original.¹⁰¹ Schlegel's comments about the desirability of unity among the arts, sciences and philosophy, and their complementary roles,¹⁰² also make sense in the context of these views on the Romantic.¹⁰³

In a later fragment, Schlegel hints at a relationship between art and morality. Kant gave art an identifiable position with regard to the understanding, the imagination and the moral sense; Schiller adapted this structure to suggest that, although there was no need for art to be moralistic, or to tackle ethical issues, the practice and enjoyment of art helped us develop the ability to make moral judgements. Hölderlin wrapped a worldview, his poetry and life's moral imperatives into a single, organic, coherent whole. However, Schlegel's published writings in general lack this earnestness of purpose. The ambivalence of irony is rarely related specifically to the moral potential of mankind. *Athenäums-Fragmente 414*, however, extends Schlegel's theme of rejecting the conventions of traditional literary genre in favour of a superior, freer, Romantic method, and applies it to conventional morality. He describes a kind of secret church that exists among the eccentric few who represent a silent opposition to the ubiquitous immorality that passes for morality in contemporary society. Their mystical manner of expression, Romantic fantasy and particular way of writing often act as a shared symbol of their beautiful secrets. Schlegel does not elaborate on this fragment, but we may surmise that the passage should be read in conjunction with

Die romantisch Dichtart ist die einzige, die mehr als Art, und gleichsam die Dichtkunst selbst ist: denn in einem gewissen Sinn ist oder soll alle Poesie romantisch sein.

¹⁰¹ *Athenäums-Fragmente*, 139.

¹⁰² Patricia Waugh, 'Introduction' in (ed.) Patricia Waugh, *Literary Theory and Criticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p.27.

¹⁰³ *Lyceums-Fragment*, 115.

Alle Kunst soll Wissenschaft, und alle Wissenschaft soll Kunst werden; Poesie und Philosophie sollen vereinigt sein.

Fragment 116, where the writer or artist sets his own law for *Poesie*. In Kant's heyday, exercising the judgement of taste led to the appreciation and creation of artefacts of classical beauty. Setting the moral law for oneself kept one obedient to the Categorical Imperative. While we do not know Schlegel's exact position with regard to the Categorical Imperative, we know he has rejected conventional norms of classical beauty. *Fragment 414* suggests he thinks morality too has moved into a more changeable, diverse and also superior epoch. Perhaps a gap that Schiller did not foresee has opened between the effects of aesthetic education, and convention.¹⁰⁴

Fragment 414 supports the popular view of the Romantic artist, as someone above the norms expected of other members of society, thus leading indirectly into the portrayal in literature and opera of the artist as an unconventional and almost wilfully shocking Bohemian, whose excesses cannot be understood by the small-minded bourgeois.

One final Schlegelian key term remains to be defined, clearly related in Schlegel's usage to his ideas of the *romantisch: Roman*, literally, 'the novel'. *Romane* are the socratic dialogue of our age.¹⁰⁵ In a *Roman* the socratic dialogue and the active hero combine to create '*eine Enzyklopädie des ganzen, geistigen Lebens eines*

¹⁰⁴ Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic conception of life: Science and philosophy in the age of Goethe*, Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp.43-45, 92-93.

Not only Schlegel's personal relationships, but also *Athenäums-Fragmente*, no.34, with its description of most modern marriages as concubinage, and its advocacy of *mariage à quatre*, combined with some scenes in *Lucinde* to excite public scandal. His suggestion, therefore, that the Romantic poet can cut through the unnecessary accretions of conventional behaviour, in order to value truly decent ways of behaving, may have been arrived at by reference to some personal experience.

¹⁰⁵ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no. 26.

Jean-Baptiste Louvet de Couvray's *Faublas*, if we want an example of what Schlegel is talking about, is the 'champagne of the genre', a *Bildungsroman* that was written in instalments spanning the years before, after and during the French revolution. (*Lyceums-Fragmente*, no. 41.)

An enticing review of this forgotten work can be read at:

http://www.ciao.fr/Amours_du_chevalier_de_Faublas_Les_Jean_Baptiste_Louvet_de_Couvray_Avis_765869 [accessed 01.02.08].

The review was posted in 2004, but appears to be an ephemeral entry that has survived on the internet.

*genialischen Individuums*¹⁰⁶ A *Roman* fulfils these criteria, regardless of its form, and therefore is not synonymous with what we call 'a novel'. Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, Schlegel says, acquires the complexion (*Anstrich*) of a *Roman*. Perhaps, too, it is from *Fragment 78* that we derive the well-worn claim that everyone has a novel in them.¹⁰⁷ This is almost literally what Schlegel goes on to infer. However, as with many popularised quotations, it is most unlikely Schlegel intended us to take the quotation in the way in which it is now used. The *Roman* we have within us is the sum of the inner freshness, vitality and movement found in any brilliant individual, since a *Roman* is essentially these qualities; it is not merely, or even, a published prose text. A variation on these comments about novel-writing is that no one should need to write more than one *Roman*, unless he or she has actually become a new person.¹⁰⁸ From this he concludes both that not all the novels written by a single author necessarily belong together, and also, alternatively, that the many writings of any one author actually make up one single work. As Eichner claimed,¹⁰⁹ Romantic literature exhibits all the seething sensuous, imaginative, spiritual and rational life that characterises the *Roman*. Taken with *Lyceums-Fragment 89*, we can thus claim that, by *Roman*, he means, not a book, but all the actually existing characteristic features of life. *Roman*, and all the terminological examples we have discussed in this chapter, further extended the critical work Schlegel had begun in the *Studium-Aufsatz* and the *Charakteristiken*.

¹⁰⁶ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no. 78.

...an encyclopaedia of the entire mental life of a brilliant individual.

¹⁰⁷ Auch enthält jeder Mensch, der gebildet ist, und sich bildet, in seinem Innern ein Roman. Daß er ihn aber äußere und schreibe, ist nicht nötig.

¹⁰⁸ *Lyceums-Fragmente*, no. 89.

¹⁰⁹ Hans Eichner, 'Friedrich Schlegel's Theory of Romantic Poetry' in *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, vol.71, no.5, Dec. 1956, p.1033.

Schlegel's achievement

Schlegel made a key statement on how he believed his work should be judged: a writer should 'show forth... through good works'.¹¹⁰ He believed his fictional and poetic writing should be giving us a philosophical message, just as the philosophical tragedies of Shakespeare and Cervantes had been acknowledged as doing in the *Studium-Aufsatz*. Likewise, his philosophy should be showing the literary qualities that he admired. An irony of the sentiment expressed here is that it runs contrary to the Protestant tradition in which Schlegel had been raised; that is, against the Lutheran belief in justification by faith, or grace.¹¹¹ Thus, Schlegel's contention that a writer must win his place in the literary-philosophical canon on the basis of his production, not by flaunting his 'faith', ie. the bare bones of his philosophical argument, but demonstrating its benefits and living out its meaning, is expressed in a religious analogy that also takes our thoughts forward to his later conversion to the Catholic faith. The significance of his chosen analogy is presumably that *Fragment 44* is itself an item of literary faith for Schlegel. It is not enough for an author or scholar to be part of a literary or philosophical movement, or to apply a certain theory of aesthetics. The ultimate aesthetic test is whether the finished work has 'life'. In Schlegel's own case the result of applying this faith was the best of his own writing, the *Charakteristiken*, essays and Fragments that we would now call literary criticism, a discipline whose terms he has continued to define.

In reaching this point, although Schlegel used ideas also found in Schiller and Hölderlin, and although aspects of Fichte's *Wechselwirkung* appear in his notions of hovering and irony, he rarely alludes directly to Kant. Art and literature emerge in Schlegel, not as phenomena primarily to be analysed and understood philosophically,

¹¹⁰ *Lyceums-Fragment* no.44. This Fragment is also referred to in chapter 10 above.

¹¹¹ Justification by works had been one of the decisive sticking points in Luther's debate with Rome.

but largely as the product of a cultural environment. He thus represents the point in our discussion furthest removed from the detail and method of the *Third Critique*. The comparatively few points of contact we have found between him and Kant are interesting, however, because Schlegel seems sometimes to be giving his own solutions to problems Kant had noticed. For instance, he has touched on questions of how to reconcile the uniquely personal individual aesthetic response with our expectation of being able to share and confirm that response in a social context; how it happens that the same art object seems so different if we return to it after a long absence; how to distinguish desire from artistic pleasure; how to account for the appeal of the monstrous; the value of originality. Irony, the process of constant becoming and the search for meaning seem, by 1800, to have replaced the carefully structured philosophy of the *Third Critique* and its attempts to integrate judgements of beauty or taste into strict theories of rationality and imagination. In giving a prominent role to meaning, however, Schlegel did not focus primarily on the linguistic aspects of literature, or on the possible meanings of the terms in which texts were expressed, despite his interest in the possibilities of how we might use or read language.¹¹² He looked for meaning in the sense of ‘significance’, or ‘importance’, or ‘the main message conveyed’. His work thus not only contributed towards the later formulation of challenges to more Lockean, empiricist theories of meaning as the naming of ideas,¹¹³ but also remained relevant to other branches of the arts. Painting, dance and sculpture can also be judged in terms of ambivalence and meaning.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Elsewhere, Schlegel also contributed to the more technical discussions of linguistic meaning, drawing on his experience as a translator.

See Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, ‘Language theory and the art of understanding’, in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Vol. 5, Romanticism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp.177-179.

¹¹³ Quentin Skinner, ‘Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas’, in (ed.) James Tully, *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his critics*, Cambridge; Oxford: Polity Press Blackwell, 1988, p.70. Skinner distinguishes among the various kinds of ‘meaning’.

Schlegel has been credited, along with Schleiermacher and Novalis, of having initiated the establishment of 'literature' as a respectable subject for philosophical investigation.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the definition of 'literature' on which Bowie tentatively settles, 'texts which retain a productive ambiguity in thoroughly differing contexts over long periods',¹¹⁶ is virtually a re-statement of Schlegel's belief in the capacity for true *Poesie* to be re-read repeatedly.¹¹⁷ However, Ruthven puts an ironical twist on the supposed validity of returning inexhaustibly to great works of art, by saying that 'cornucopian' texts, such as Shakespeare's, 'create the illusion of trans-historical permanence', as they survive changes in critical fashion.¹¹⁸ A further feature of Schlegel's work that conforms with definitions of literary criticism is his suggestion of criteria for judging the quality or value of literature. Ruthven mentions both vague and formalistic criteria that literary critics have used; Schlegel and our other

Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, 'Language theory and the art of understanding', in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Vol. 5, Romanticism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp.167.

¹¹⁴ Schlegel's slightly later essay, 'Description of paintings in Paris and the Netherlands in the years 1802 -04', emphasises the expression of the artist's feeling, but also the meaning – usually religious – that painting, as a 'hieroglyph', is capable of conveying in symbolic form.

Friedrich Schlegel, 'Description of paintings in Paris and the Netherlands in the years 1802 – 1804', in (ed.) Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger, *Art in Theory 1648 - 1815: An anthology of changing ideas*, Malden MA; Oxford; Carlton Vic.: Blackwell, 2000, pp. 925-934.

¹¹⁵ Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: the Philosophy of German Literary Theory*, New York: Routledge, 1997, p.4.

Bowie traces the development of twentieth century critical theory back to the work of the 'Romantic' writers, a development of which he believes many French and Anglophone critical theorists have been unaware. His powerful account draws strongly on an analysis of changing attitudes towards the nature of language, that is, on the impact that changes in philology had on Schlegel's work.

¹¹⁶ Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: the Philosophy of German Literary Theory*, New York: Routledge, 1997, p.7.

¹¹⁷ See chapter 11 above.

¹¹⁸ K.K. Ruthven, 'Literary criticism', in (ed.) Michael Payne, *Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

available at: Blackwell reference online,

http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9780631207535_chunk_g9780631207535_15_ss1-21 [accessed 08.10.08].

His point is that their extensive variety of form and content permits each literary perspective to select a different theme, and claim it as the writer's greatest achievement.

protagonists use both kinds of criteria. The criteria of ‘inner life’ and *Witz* are vague, while ‘making strange’, from Ruthven’s formalist category, reminds us of both Schlegel and Schiller. Literary criticism since Schlegel has undergone various changes and served various ideological purposes, but all seem to owe something to criteria referred to by Schlegel. He offered a form of reader’s guide that exposed readers to additional viewpoints, encouraging ‘any discourse on literature’.¹¹⁹ Yet despite Schlegel’s efforts to encourage readers to explore a text and discover its meaning in as many ways as possible, by applying their own critical abilities and varying cultural experiences,¹²⁰ distinct schools of criticism have emerged, that apparently promote particular perspectives on literature.

Schlegel’s literary criticism has been a lasting achievement, but probably did not match his own aspirations, and did not make him a great philosopher. For Beiser, Schlegel was ‘mysterious’,¹²¹ because, although he took philosophy seriously, he concealed his philosophical argument from a public readership.¹²² He wanted something that he perhaps demonstrated was not possible, *Symphilosophie* and *Sympoesie*, an amalgam of sensuously speaking philosophy and cerebral poetic literature to which a variety of thinkers from various intellectual backgrounds had contributed. The fact that the *Charakteristiken* were probably intended as a contribution to the development of these disciplines is demonstrated by the use we

¹¹⁹ Wellek, 1986, p.xvii, quoted in K.K. Ruthven, ‘Literary criticism’, in (ed.) Michael Payne, *Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

¹²⁰ Jon Klancher, ‘Criticism and the crisis of the republic of letters’, in (ed.) Marshall Brown, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Vol. 5, Romanticism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.309.

¹²¹ Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.106ff.

¹²² Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.454.

Schlegel’s notebooks can be studied, and his philosophical position reconstructed from the student notes surviving from his philosophy lectures at the University of Jena in 1801, but he did not appear concerned to present them in published form.

have been able to make in this thesis of, for example, the essay *Über Lessing*.¹²³ We have found evidence of Schlegel's more general philosophical theory of aesthetics by examining quotations that ostensibly refer only to specific aspects of Lessing's dramas. Literary criticism is the surviving result of Schlegel's experiment, an invaluable and productive academic and popular tool, but not the synthesising catch-all for which he had hoped.

¹²³ See chapter 10 above. *Goethes Meister* and *Gespräch über die Poesie* could be analysed in a similar way.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions we can draw from having studied these three thinkers of the 1790s naturally repeat some of the introductory comments made, and some of the points highlighted in the course of the thesis. The work of Schiller, Hölderlin and Friedrich Schlegel has been discussed to illustrate changes in aesthetics during the cultural move from Enlightenment classicism to Romanticism, but, furthermore, it can equally well be said that their work itself represents that shift.¹ They exemplify so well the features mentioned in our general introduction that they typify and have helped define the decline of classicism and rise of the Romantic movement in the cultural life of the German states. The author hopes, however, that by crediting them with such a transformational rôle we do more than reveal a historical curiosity. Most generally, this is not so much because of their intended aims, but because of some significant side effects of their work that we shall identify.

The main starting point for this thesis and for aesthetics in the 1790s was Kant's aesthetic theory, as set out in the *Third Critique*. Our three subjects modified Kantian theory, believing they could improve on his philosophical analyses of mankind and of the processes of artistic production and artistic appreciation. Implicitly, we have agreed that they provided a fuller account of what happens both when the creative artist is at work, and when his or her audience engages with the results. On the other hand, we have also taken it to be relatively uncontentious that they did not equal Kant's comprehensive and systematic analytical structure. Both

¹ This seems to be why J.M. Bernstein, too, chose them, along with Lessing, as the main figures discussed in the introductory essay to his anthology.

see (ed.) J.M. Bernstein, *Classical and Romantic German Aesthetics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, Introduction, p.viii.

See also Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: the Philosophy of German Literary Theory*, New York: Routledge, 1997, p.136, '...the historical continuity of the story which has taken us in a fairly direct line from the Pantheism controversy and Kant to Romantic hermeneutics...'

Conclusion

Hölderlin and Schlegel thought the foundationalist architectural metaphor for philosophical system-building, used by most philosophers including Kant, was mistaken, and we have seen already that this methodological conviction even led Schlegel to evaluate Kant as witty, thus dismissing the carefully argued system within which his insights are situated.

The side effects to which we referred above are that, by trying to account for all that is going on in the minds of creator and audience, and in the work of art or nature that is being appreciated, these three thinkers progressively widened the scope of the aesthetic. The endpoint by about 1800 was that the whole human mind was thought to be involved in appreciating art or nature, and that this act of aesthetic appreciation was not an isolated, occasional or incidental interplay between the understanding and the imagination, but a continual and possibly constant, though not always conscious activity, that involves all our sensuous and rational abilities, and our powers of knowing or feeling. In this sense aesthetics and engagement with art came to be seen as a way of ensuring that humanity was exercising all its natural and acquired capacities, and became a force for personal improvement and inner unity, and, in Hölderlin's case, for unity with the natural universe as well.

In relation to the artistic artefacts themselves, our three thinkers lost interest in what Kant had said about subjective and objective qualities, and considerably broadened the kinds of features that could be counted as aesthetic qualities in any aesthetic judgement. Admittedly, they retained something that we might claim was akin to or derived from the main Kantian claim of subjectivity, that is, that we derive pleasure from internally observing the free play of our faculties. It is possible to trace the changing way in which they interpreted the phenomenon that Kant had been trying to address in this explanation. Thus, Schiller devised his conception of a

Conclusion

balance between the sensuous and form drives that make up the human being, and manifests itself in a play drive. He also characterised our rather ambiguous relationship with the work of art in his notion of *der schöne Schein*, that he subsequently developed into the notion of the sentimental in art. Something of this survived in Hölderlin as the balance or harmonious opposition between the determined and the undetermined, one of the several dimensions of the divine moment for which all poets aim; and finally Kant's ideas of free play and harmonious balance are discernible in Schlegel's notion of infinitely regressive Romantic irony. Although the relationship between Kant's stable, fixed judgement of taste and the shifting dynamism of Romantic irony may seem distant, both were ways of addressing the persistent thought that art is somehow recreational (ie. play), hard to define and not logically determined.

However, in addition to modified similarities with Kant, we have also seen significant differences, possibly the greatest of which was the move away from a search for beauty, and towards a search for meaning. The original subjective / objective debate may have encouraged this development, because it seemed at first sight so unlikely that our artistic pleasure might be quite independent of the constituent characteristics of the observed art object or natural phenomenon. An immediate implication of the revised and growing list of features that could be expected to excite an aesthetic response was that the exercise of what Kant would have called our aesthetic judgement now became part of the general attempt to relate to and understand the world around us. Beauty may be discoverable by contemplation, as Kant had suggested, but it might also be discovered gradually as a result of changing experiences and priorities, and as a result of close observation, or discussion with others, or under the guidance of a mentor, or in a witty flash of life-changing

Conclusion

inspiration, or in many other ways that merge imperceptibly with the list of ways in which we perceive, learn, work out or discover anything at all about the world. It is then on the basis of these immediately observable differences between the beginning and the end of the 1790s that we come to the wider legacy of the change from Enlightenment classicism to Romanticism, as seen in the work of Schiller, Hölderlin and Schlegel. The interpretative demands placed on the reader or audience by Romantic aesthetics, and the requirements it believed art made of the creative artist's powers of communication, encouraged the development of hermeneutics as an area of study. None of our three thinkers seems to have realised that this change was taking place, but it was of lasting importance nevertheless.

If we may sum up, writer by writer, what happened in this decade of change, we can elaborate on some of these general changes a little. Schiller's *Kallias Letters* remained closest to Kant, accepting the Kantian model of human thought and perception from the *First Critique*, then accepting that 'beauty' is not a concept applied by the understanding; though going on to account for this, not as Kant did, but through the involvement of the practical reason in the perceptual process. Kant's suggestion that beauty is a sensuous analogy for the rationality of freedom perhaps prompted aspects of Schiller's revised explanation, and also encouraged him to look more carefully at the extent to which identifiable features in the beautiful object provoked our subjective experience of beauty. Although he failed to show that beauty is an objective property, and was thus obliged to accept that his theory was, strictly speaking, subjectivist, he integrated the operation of senses, imagination, understanding and practical reason into the perception of the beautiful object. By doing this he broke down some of the mental compartmentalisation of which he suspected Kant. Once he went on to write *Anmut und Würde*, which brought out the

Conclusion

importance of moral beauty in humanity, as a counterpart to the apparent autonomy that the *Kallias Letters* had identified in beautiful objects, he had gone a little further to providing a holistic account of human perfection, that required both rational moral thought and sensuous feeling or instinct.

Taken together, Schiller's next important publications, the *Aesthetic Letters* and *Naïve and Sentimental* further emphasise the extent to which all Kantian faculties are involved in the appreciation of beauty. The involvement of all the faculties is so complete that, by this stage, Schiller has abandoned almost all attempts to distinguish among them. He speaks only in terms of sensuousness and rationality in the human being, content and form in the beautiful object, and of being determined or undetermined in general. The important Kantian aspect that remains is not the nature of the elements involved in the mental free play that constitutes the perception of beauty, but the very fact that beauty is a point of free play, harmony and balance, whether within the self or, depending on whatever it is we are capable of perceiving, within the beautiful object. Far less mention is made of beautiful objects as such, and more emphasis is laid on beauty as a quality or general idea, and on the artist's ability to call forth an aesthetic response from an audience.

The pleasure Kant associated with the perception of beauty was a pleasure derived from our inner awareness of the free play within our own mind. Although Schiller side-steps the question of whereabouts in our minds and why we might feel this pleasure, he still makes use of Kant's idea that we virtually observe ourselves enjoying beauty; and he develops from it, firstly, his idea of semblance, and then, his idea of the sentimental. Semblance is the way in which we simultaneously think a beautiful object is perfectly balanced and autonomously determined from within, yet know that it cannot possibly have chosen to do this for itself. Taken one step further

Conclusion

semblance becomes sentimentality, or artistic self-consciousness. Aspects of sentimentality are, on one hand, the author's awareness that there is a gap between the real world and the ideal world he depicts in an art work; and on the other, the audience or reader's awareness that a work of art is both true-to-life and imaginary, the product of someone else's imagination.

In Hölderlin's theory of tragedy this element of self-consciousness holds an important place. Like Schiller he sees beauty as a point of balance. The writer balances a whole range of factors: personal, particular and universal, every possible identifiable genre of poetry or drama, every point in the unifying temporal thread running backwards and forwards through a literary work, the rational and the sensuous, the form and the content, the real and the ideal, reason and feeling, the defined and the indeterminate. All these factors and more must be perfectly balanced at the divine moment that constitutes the beauty of the work of art and the audience's appreciation of it. However, this point of balance is also a point of crisis or contradiction. The very fact that the many elements are so diverse, and still discernible as being so, makes their harmonious unity all the more remarkable, and is also constitutive of its beauty. As regards mankind, like Schiller, Hölderlin accepts that we are simultaneously rational and sensuous, and is even less concerned with the structural analysis of thought, but he allows the senses more importance than Schiller, because, although the understanding is involved in the creation and recognition of works of art, the divine moment of harmonious contradiction that we have mentioned above is actually felt, which is to say, known sensuously and independently of cognition. Both writer and audience feel the perfect beauty of the piece, even if, as Kant and Schiller agreed, they cannot fully conceptualise it.

Hölderlin also addresses the problem of objectivity that had troubled Schiller when he first began to write on aesthetics. Hölderlin does not do this explicitly, but we have shown in our earlier chapters how he arrived at a form of non-subjective idealism, in which all that is, including the human mind and its working, alongside and in parallel with the natural world, coheres with or is grounded in Being. The result of this metaphysical position is to permit us to say that all nature conforms to the same patterns, and that there is no philosophical need to set up any strict dichotomy between external, or in-itself, world, and internal, or subjective, experience of a phenomenal world. Thus, increased knowledge and understanding of the world is just that – a direct and improved comprehension of the world as it really is. Therefore beauty does not just show us appearance, and is not just an analogy for freedom, but genuinely gives us an insight into the world.

Hölderlin's very broad conception of beauty, telling us, in effect, that life and the world are beauty, provided we take them in the right way, together with my use at the end of the previous paragraph of the word 'insight', leads us into the changes in aesthetics that came about with Friedrich Schlegel. Schlegel began, in his *Studium-Aufsatz*, by apparently trying to draw the boundaries of the beautiful more tightly than was becoming customary at the time. His comments on philosophical tragedy, that tries to convey a message to its public, seem at first like a direct attack on Schiller's recognition that the modern writer is unavoidably sentimental, and has a message for his public, rather than simply reproducing the truth of what he knows from the social world around him for us to contemplate calmly in the manner of Winckelmann's classical artist. At the same time, however, Schlegel praises the liveliness of Romance literature, Renaissance Italy and, especially, Shakespeare, who are capable of using

Conclusion

bizarre, unpleasant, ugly or unexpected material to further a carefully conceived and successful end.

Two strands from the way Schlegel subsequently developed the points he makes in the *Studium-Aufsatz* have lasting academic importance. The first arises from Schlegel's own practice, namely, the production of what are effectively readers' guides to selected texts or authors. In these works Schlegel applies his own critical and theoretical position to a reading of the work in question, and provides other readers or would-be readers with a fresh or enriched perspective, and without concerning himself with analysing the structure of the reader's thought processes. A presumed whole person responds to *Poesie*, even though that response may itself hover or oscillate indeterminately. This was a great contribution to the growth of literary criticism and its establishment as a discipline at various levels, whether in the form of a book review for the general reader, or as an academic discipline. We have pointed out already that this result probably fell short of Schlegel's own ambition, since he intended a magnificent fusion of philosophy, myth and fiction, but his failure to achieve this perhaps shows only that he had not realised how rich the results of a critical approach to literature could be.

The second key feature in the way the *Studium-Aufsatz* values the best work of both ancient and more modern times, as we have seen Schlegel confirm in his essays *On Lessing*, and *Gespräch über die Poesie*, and in his *Fragments*, is the inner life of these works. By this he meant something slightly different from Hölderlin's view of life and the world, and more like Kant's conception of spirit. He meant that the beauty in a work of art lies in an audience's ability to discern that it has a life of its own, that life flows through it, that it coheres and contradicts, stops and starts, progresses and digresses within itself, just as the life of an animate creature would do. Alongside the

recognition of this apparently independent, autonomous artistic life runs the audience's equally confident knowledge that the work of art is the inanimate creation of a self-conscious artist. These are the insights that go to make up beauty, and constitute Romantic irony, according to Schlegel. Irony and the beauty of literature are the constant oscillation between the audience's belief and disbelief in the layers of truth and illusion presented by the work of art.

However, despite his metaphor of the regress created by the series of mirrors, Schlegel also writes as if we could discover the truth about a work of art. By frequently re-reading a piece of literature in the light of greater wisdom, experience or breadth of vision, we can progress towards a full understanding, and eventually appreciate it properly. In other words, it would appear that he is advising us on the best way in which to determine its meaning, in the broadest sense. The most immediate demonstration of the usefulness of this approach is before us now – this thesis. It exists in its current form at the end of a long process of reading, annotating, evaluating and then re-reading the primary and secondary texts on which the thesis draws, having considered the possible value of the task in hand and the most suitable methodology. In this sense, it records the results of Schlegel's own suggested method.² If the author were now to re-visit each of the primary texts, they would surely present a slightly different face, viewed in the light of her current knowledge. This is also the point at which we see how plausible it would be to claim that Schlegel's view of literary aesthetics also opens a connection between the strictly biblical disciplines of hermeneutic interpretation current at that time, and aesthetics in

² In case a reference to Schlegel is not enough to vindicate the methodology described, we should note that it is also an attempt to avoid the distortions and excesses discussed by Skinner:

Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas', in (ed.) James Tully, *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his critics*, Cambridge; Oxford: Polity Press Blackwell, 1988.

Conclusion

general.³ The aesthetic work of Schiller, Hölderlin and Schlegel thus provides a link and some continuity between classical aesthetics and the philosophical hermeneutics of Ast and Schleiermacher in the early 1800s.

This is confirmed, as we have mentioned, in Bauman, who acknowledges the Romantic roots of hermeneutics, though also its growth from an idealist philosophical position. Hermeneutics became a way of studying history, and then of studying understanding in general, by the application of a method in some ways similar to that advocated by both Hölderlin and Schlegel in the appreciation or evaluation of works of poetic art. In common, the two disciplines presume that there is some core experience, knowledge or emotion shared by the reader (or evaluator) and creative artist (or situated historical personage / events). From this springs an instant, but partial, communication and understanding. However, the particularities of time, place, or personal experience, combined, in the case of art, with the level of technical artistic skill or audience education, or, in the case, for example, of history, with the amount or type of evidence that has survived into our own time, prevent this immediate understanding from being anything more than partial. The repeated re-reading advocated by Schlegel, the ever closer appreciation of the spirit or inner life of the work of art, and the questions he raised about comprehension, are paralleled in hermeneutics by the working of the hermeneutic circle, the continual process of reinterpretation and fresh understanding achieved by the culturally aware historian or scientist. Thus, in hermeneutics, possibly beginning with Schlegel's friend, Schleiermacher,⁴ our understanding comes from a constant oscillation between the

³ Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: the Philosophy of German Literary Theory*, New York: Routledge, 1997, p.94.

⁴ Nicholas Saul, 'The pursuit of the subject: Literature as critic and perfecter', in (ed.) Nicholas Saul, *Modern German Literature and Philosophy 1700-1990*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.74. Saul confirms that Schleiermacher's first work was written in 1805, in response to his time with the Jena circle, although not published until 1830.

Conclusion

particular and the total, and then again from the total to the particular.⁵ Originally hermeneuticists seem to have agreed with Schlegel's suggestion that the resultant accumulation of perspectives leads to an ultimate point of bias-free truth. However, there came a later acceptance that the cultural bias, as originally recognised by Schiller, is essentially present, each cultural perspective possessing its own validity.⁶

This thesis thus leads us finally to the suggestion that hermeneutics, a dominant and independent branch of nineteenth century philosophy, grew at least partly from the aesthetics of the 1790s, and, especially from the very literary application of aesthetics developed by Friedrich Schlegel. Schelling, the 'pure' philosopher, whom we rejected in the introduction as a candidate for discussion precisely because of his commitment to the development of a structured, idealist philosophy, was arguably the thinker who carried the more logically systematic tradition of the critical philosophy forwards in the form of the mainstream of German Idealism that then continued with Hegel and Schopenhauer.⁷

If we consider the possible after-effects of these post-Kantian changes in aesthetics only in relation to the philosophy of art, we find that several lines of thought that appear originally to have become distinct during the 1790s have continued into twentieth and twenty-first century thinking. Indeed, the extent to which they have developed as separate and independent theories in the mean time has confounded Schiller's possible hope that he was clarifying the Kantian philosophy.⁸

⁵ Zygmunt Bauman, *Hermeneutics and Social Science*, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p.28.

⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, *Hermeneutics and Social Science*, London: Hutchinson, 1978, p.46.

⁷ Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: the Philosophy of German Literary Theory*, New York: Routledge, 1997. One of the main theses in the first four chapters of Bowie's book is that modern analytical and linguistic philosophy tends to overlooks the extent to which it shares Romantic roots with literary theory, while literary theory, (a 'poor man's philosophy'), often overlooks its debt to post-Romantic hermeneutics. See his Preface, p.vii. I take Bowie's view as partial confirmation of this bifurcation.

⁸For an excellent overview of the most important directions in which late twentieth and early twenty-first century aesthetics has extended, see:

Conclusion

While the notion of Kantian disinterest and Schiller's being 'out of tune' have survived vigorously in the continued belief that we must step back from our acceptance of the everyday, and approach the art object with an unbiased perception, even with naïvety, the range of possible objects to which an aesthetic response might now seem appropriate has widened; as too has the range of permissible responses to art.

Thus, the apparent movement in the history of ideas set out in this thesis, that relies on evidence collected from various works by Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Schlegel, is a metaphorical journey from the more analytical Enlightenment view of aesthetics as an attempt to capture a fixed and stable picture of perfect, classical beauty towards a Romantic conception of beauty as something almost without definable limits, that is constantly re-adjusting itself and being re-evaluated in the light of an endless succession of personal, cultural and physical changes. We have looked only at the thoughts of three men with a literary background, but, as our discussion has shown, the implications of what they wrote were relevant more widely than in the literary sphere alone. Aesthetics in the 1790s emerge as having lived out Schlegel's description of the history of philosophy in a nutshell: 'from the Socratic dialogue to the novel',⁹ from pure, abstract philosophical aesthetic analysis, as exemplified by Kant, to the teeming richness of life itself, as exemplified by Schlegel's view of the identity between life and the Romantic novel.

Jerrold Levison, 'Philosophical Aesthetics: an overview', in (ed.) Jerrold Levison, *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp.3ff.

His contents page itself illustrates the extent to which themes that our three thinkers were holding together in a single aesthetic theory have since developed separately – for example: Representation in art; Expression in art; Creativity in art; Beauty; Art and emotion... and so on.

⁹ I feel very pleased to be able to end the thesis with this flash of Schlegelian *Witz*, for which I am indebted, as in so much else, to my supervisor, Dr Andrew Edgar.

Diagram 2)

SCHILLER (1)

The *Kallias* Letters

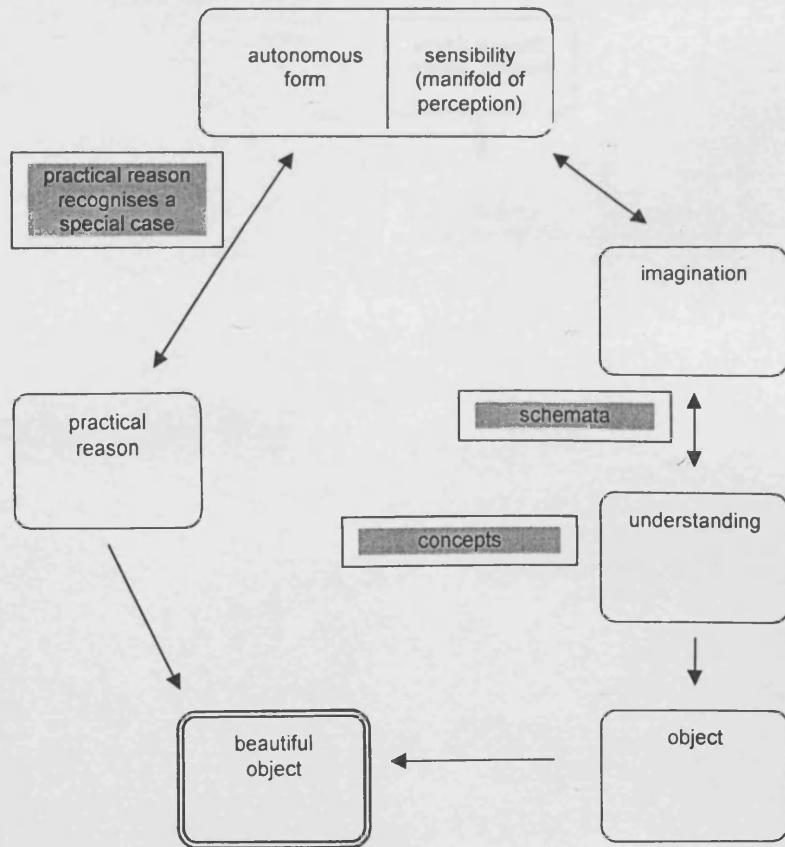
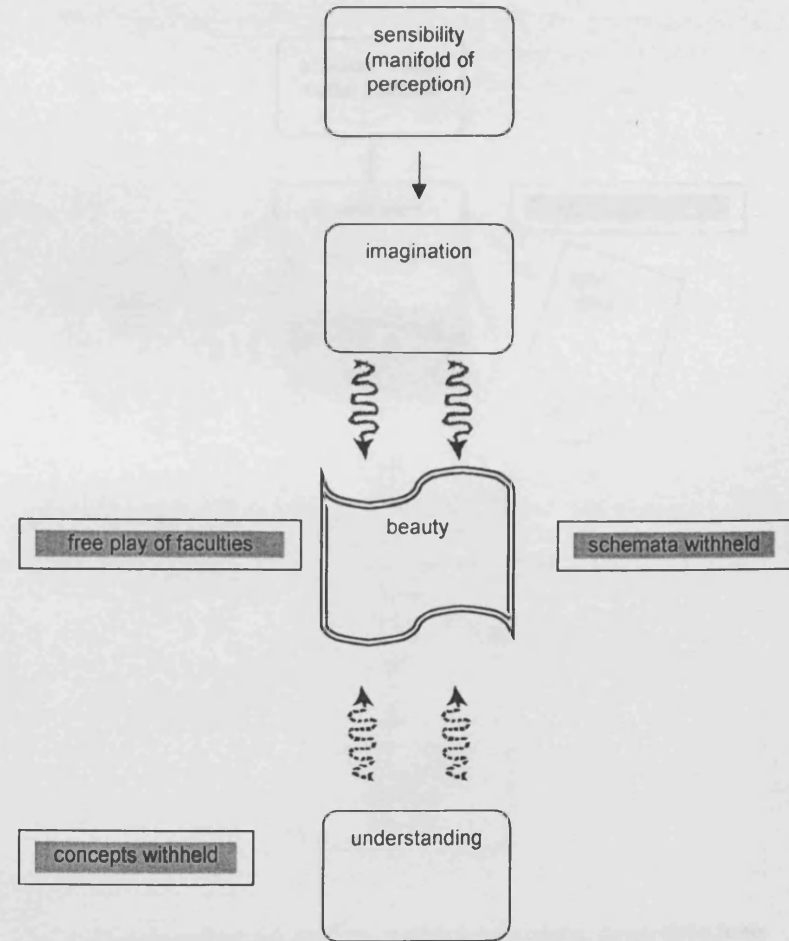


Diagram 1)

KANT (1)



No involvement of practical reason.
No conceptually formed object.

Diagram 3)

SCHILLER (2)

Possible interpretation of *Aesthetic Letters*

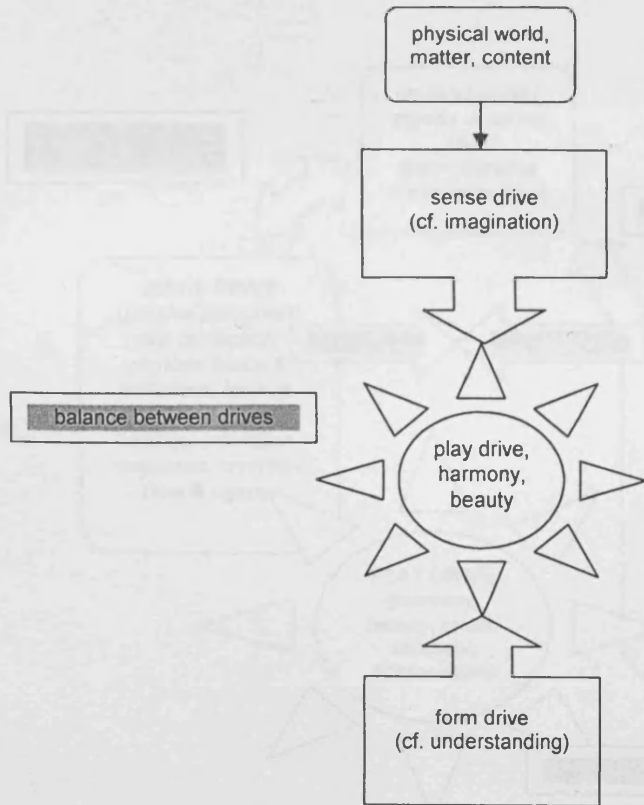
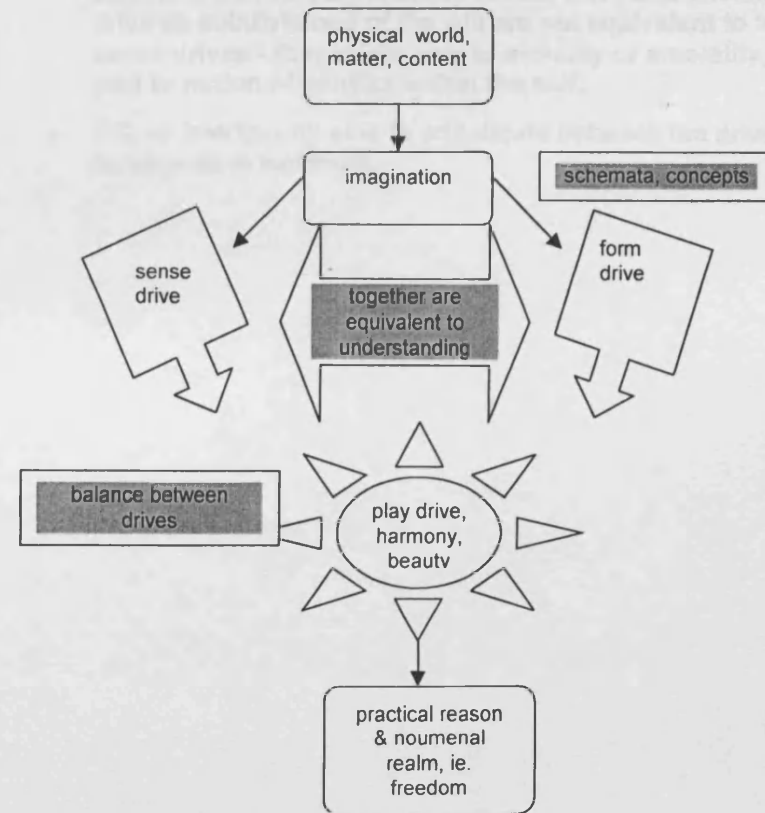


Diagram 4)

SCHILLER (3)

Possible interpretation of *Aesthetic Letters*



No place for the equivalent of practical reason.

Problems:

1. Abandons *Kallias Letters* model – no place for practical reason.
2. Where are the schemata? In sense drive, or form drive?
3. How can this model prepare us for morality?

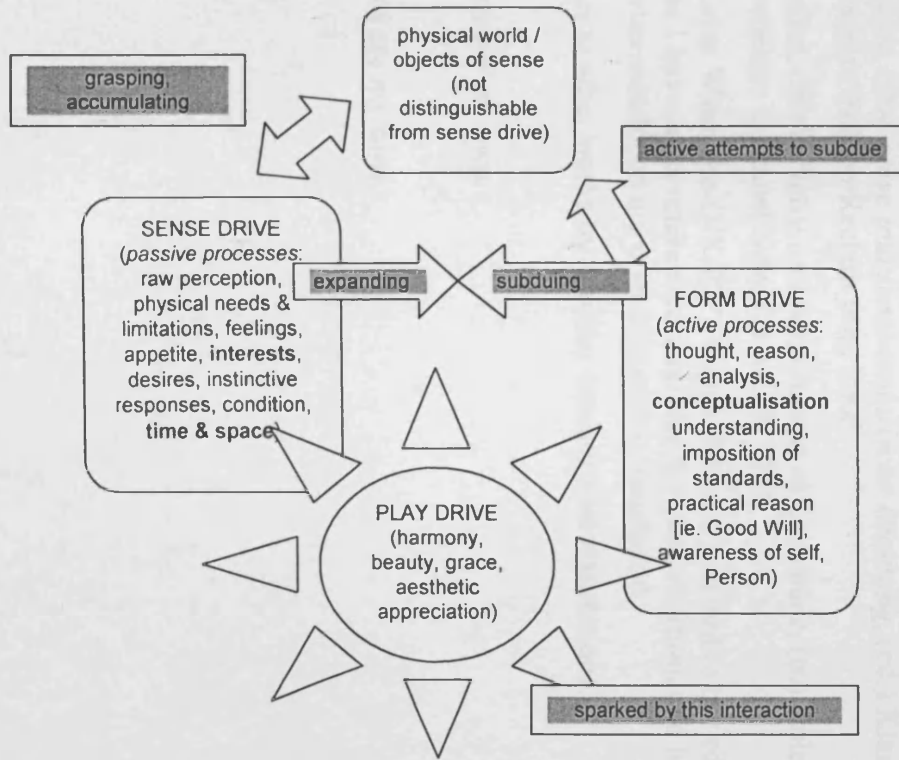
Problems:

4. Sense drive should include physical matter. In this model, sense drive is far removed from world.
5. Form drive said to be concerned with morality as well as reason. Why are the practical reason and freedom elevated above the combined drives?

Diagram 5)

SCHILLER (4)

Likely intended model in *Aesthetic Letters*.



- ◆ The form drive combines the functions of the theoretical and practical reason.
- ◆ Reinhold's conceptions of the selfish drive and unselfish drive as subdivisions of the will are not equivalent to form & sense drives - they relate only to morality or amorality, but lead to notion of conflict within the self.
- ◆ Will as free faculty able to adjudicate between the drives, in Schiller as in Reinhold.

No exact Kantian equivalents.

- ◆ WILL operates as a power vis-à-vis both drives.

REALM OF FREEDOM & THE WILL AS ARBITRATOR (reflection & evaluation)

354

A NOTE ON THE EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS USED IN THE THESIS

The primary sources used in this thesis for Kant, Schiller, Hölderlin and Schlegel were chosen on the basis of being accessible and reputable. Sometimes, if one was readily available, I have chosen to back up my use of German editions with a good, professionally published translation. In other cases, as indicated below, I have provided my own translations.

Kant

Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, (ed.) Heine F. Klemme and Piero Giordanetti, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2001

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, (ed.) Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000

Quotations and page references throughout the thesis are taken from the English translation by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. The German and English editions include marginal references to the standard German edition of Kant's works.

Schiller

Friedrich Schiller, *Kallias oder über die Schönheit* and *Über Anmut und Würde*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1999.

All references and quotations are from this edition. Translations are my own.

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters*, (ed.) (tr.) Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982 (parallel text English / German edition).

Since this is a parallel text edition, I have taken my quotations from and given page references to the Wilkinson and Willoughby's English translation.

Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, (ed.) Klaus L. Berghahn, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2005.

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature*, (tr.) Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd, 1981.

I have used Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly's translation and referred to her edition. In some instances I have cross-referenced with the Berghahn edition, and have very occasionally also mentioned my own alternative translation.

Any references to other works by Schiller use my own translations.

Hölderlin

All translations are my own.

Schlegel

All translations are my own.

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