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德国浪漫主义 早期政治著作选

*The Early Political
Writings of the
German Romantics*

Edited by
FREDERICK C.
BEISER

中国政法大学出版社

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the German Romantics*

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在政治理论领域，“剑桥政治思想史原著系列”作为主要的学生教科丛书，如今已牢固确立了其地位。本丛书旨在使学生能够获得从古希腊到 20 世纪初期西方政治思想史方面所有最为重要的原著。它囊括了所有著名的经典原著，但与此同时，它又扩展了传统的评价尺度，以便能够纳入范围广泛、不那么出名的作品。而在此之前，这些作品中有许多从未有过现代英文版本可资利用。只要可能，所选原著都会以完整而不删节的形式出版，其中的译作则是专门为本丛书的目的而安排。每一本书都有一个评论性的导言，加上历史年表、生平梗概、进一步阅读指南，以及必要的词汇表和原文注解。本丛书的最终目的是，为西方政治思想的整个发展脉络提供一个清晰的轮廓。

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CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Preface

The political thought of the German romantics covers a long period, beginning in the 1790s and extending into the 1830s. Since the most important and interesting texts from this period could not all be included in one volume, I have chosen material from a single phase of romantic thought. This is the period from 1797 to 1802, the most fertile and formative period of Romanticism, which is generally known as *Frühromantik*. Even within this period, it has been necessary to be selective because of the wealth of material. I have therefore concentrated upon the most important writings of three leading figures of the early romantic circle: Novalis, Schleiermacher and Friedrich Schlegel. Selecting texts from this period alone, and from these thinkers alone, provides a coherence and unity that would be impossible to achieve in a more comprehensive anthology.

Within my chosen parameters I have attempted to be as exhaustive and thorough as possible. I have included all kinds of writings relevant to the early political thought of Novalis, Schleiermacher and Schlegel: fragments, lectures, essays and treatises. No claim is made, however, to provide *all* the early political writings of the German romantics. I have had to exclude two major works from the early period: Schelling's *Deduktion des Naturrechts* (1796–7) and Schleiermacher's incomplete manuscript *Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens* (1799). Though these works are interesting and important, they are not suitable for an introductory edition. Schelling's *Deduktion* is comprehensible only to someone who has a good grasp of Fichte's early philosophy; and Schleiermacher's *Versuch*

is best understood *after* reading the *Monologen*, which have been translated in part here.

Although Fichte was a crucial influence upon the early romantics, I have not included any of his writings in this volume. This is partly because they are available elsewhere in a very reliable recent edition, *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca: New York: Cornell University Press, 1988). It is also a mistake to regard Fichte as a romantic in any strict sense of the term. He was not a regular participant in the meetings of the romantic circle; and some of the central ideas of the early romantics – the role of art in society, the organic concept of nature, the place of individuality in ethics – were formulated in reaction to him.

Since the young romantics stressed *the unity* of politics, aesthetics and religion, any edition of their political writings should not construe the term 'political' in a narrow sense. I have included, therefore, fragments on metaphysics, ethics and aesthetics when they are essential to understand the context of early romantic political thought. For this reason I have added the whole texts of Novalis' *Pollen* and Schlegel's *Ideas*.

The early German romantics never provided a systematic exposition of their political thought; it is scattered throughout many fragments, aphorisms, essays and lectures. Its most condensed expression, and indeed its *locus classicus*, is Novalis' *Faith and Love* and *Political Aphorisms*. A reader who wants to proceed direct to the core of their thought is best advised to begin with these works.

Many of the texts have been translated for the first time. Those that have been translated before have been translated anew for this edition. Like most translations, mine have attempted to steer a middle path between the conflicting ideals of accuracy and readability. I have usually aimed at an accurate rather than a literary translation; but in many cases I have had to sacrifice accuracy for more readable English. I have often altered punctuation, divided lengthy paragraphs and eliminated redundancies. In the case of Novalis' and Schlegel's unpublished manuscripts I have sometimes deleted phrases or words when they were incidental to the main thought. In most cases, however, the original emphasis has been retained.

The translations are based upon the latest critical editions: the *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe* (Munich: Schöningh, 1966), ed.

Ernst Behler *et al.*; *Novalis Schriften. Die Werke von Friedrich von Hardenberg* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), ed. Richard Samuel *et al.*; *Monologen, Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Friedrich Michael Schiele, Dritte Auflage (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1978) and the *Friedrich Schlegel-Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), ed. Günter Meckenstock *et al.*

The texts of the young romantics present formidable challenges to the commentator as well as translator. They rely much upon allusion and nuance, and they adopt the technical vocabulary of Kant, Fichte and Schiller while often altering its meaning. Even worse, they are sometimes deliberately obscure, ambiguous and mystifying. Schlegel and Novalis chose to write in a *Rätselsprache* or *Bildersprache*, whose meaning would be apparent only to the initiated. To make their texts more accessible to the modern reader, I have added many notes. In writing these, I have been especially indebted to three Novalis commentaries: that of Richard Samuel and Hans Joachim Mähl in the Hanser edition of the *Werke* (Munich, 1978); that of Gerhard Schulz in the *Studienausgabe* (Munich: Beck, 1969); and that of Hans Dietrich Dahnke and Rudolf Walbiner in *Novalis, Werke in Einem Band* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1983).

In preparing this volume, I have been aided by several colleagues and friends. Christiane Goldmann, Michael Halberstam and Martin Schönfeld have advised me on questions of translation. Raymond Geuss, Quentin Skinner and two anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press gave me valuable comments on earlier drafts. The idea for a volume devoted entirely to the political writings of the early romantics came originally from Raymond Geuss.

Introduction

Romantic aesthetics and politics

Although it seems hopelessly abstract and vague, the term 'German Romanticism' has been given a definite historical meaning by generations of scholars. It denotes a loosely organized and vaguely self-conscious intellectual movement that began in Germany toward the close of the eighteenth century. It is even possible to identify specific times and places as the beginning of German Romanticism. The crucial period would be from 1797 to 1802, and the pivotal places would be Jena and Berlin. During this time, a group of writers met in the home of A. W. Schlegel in Jena, and in the literary salons of Henriette Herz and Rahel Levin in Berlin. There they held frank and free discussions about philosophy, poetry, politics and religion. The leading members of this circle were Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773-1801), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1845), the brothers August Wilhelm (1767-1845) and Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher (1767-1834), and Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772-1801), who was known by his pen name Novalis. The members of this group called themselves 'the new school', 'the new sect' and, later and more famously, 'the romantic school'. Though their meetings were charmed, they were also short lived. Their circle suffered some severe blows with the deaths of Novalis and Wackenroder in 1801; and it disbanded when the Schlegel brothers left Jena in 1802.

German Romanticism did not, of course, disappear with the demise of this early circle. Its legacy lived on, and it eventually became one of the most influential movements in modern intellectual history. German Romanticism proved to be very protean, evolving into distinct periods which are in some respects even contradictory to one another. Customarily, it is divided into three phases: early Romanticism or *Frühromantik* from 1797 to 1802, whose chief members have already been mentioned; high Romanticism or *Hochromantik* from 1803 to 1815, whose main representatives are Achim von Arnim, Joseph Görres, Adam Mueller, Caspar David Friedrich, Zacharias Werner, Clemens Brentano and Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert; and finally late Romanticism or *Spätromantik* from 1816 to 1830, whose leading figures are Franz Baader, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Johann von Eichendorff and the elder Friedrich Schlegel and Schelling. Of course, there are continuities and family resemblances between these periods; but since they also have differing, even opposing, characteristics, it is important to distinguish between them. It is a common error to interpret early Romanticism in the light of later Romanticism, as if the later philosophy and politics of the movement are true without qualification for its earlier phase.

German Romanticism began as a literary movement. In its early period, its goals and interests were primarily aesthetic, preoccupied with the need to determine the standards of good taste and literature. The young romantics made art their highest value, their *raison d'être*, their be all and end all. They attributed great powers to art: it was the criterion of absolute knowledge, the means of unifying the personality, the mediator between man and nature, and the source of social harmony.

Although German Romanticism was essentially an aesthetic movement, it also deserves a prominent place in any history of modern political thought. In its formative period, it developed political ideas of the first historical importance. Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher developed a concept of community to counter the atomism and anomie of modern society; they formulated an ethic of love and self-realization in reaction to the formalism of Kant's ethics; they questioned some of the main presuppositions of the liberal tradition, especially its individualism; they criticized the inhumanity and 'philistinism' of civil society; and

they championed many modern social values, such as the emancipation of women, sexual freedom and the right of divorce. The political thought of the young romantics remains of great interest today for its attempt to synthesize, and to avoid the troublesome extremes of, liberalism and conservatism. Their attempt to synthesize these traditions is apparent in several respects: although the young romantics stressed the value of community, they also insisted upon the need for individual liberty; while they emphasized the value of organic growth, continuity and tradition, they also championed progress, development and reform; and if they pointed out the dangers of a narrow rationalism, they also recognized the value of reason and defended the rights of free enquiry.

What is the connection between romantic aesthetics and politics? *Prima facie* there is none at all. It was a cardinal tenet of the young romantics that art is an end in itself, and that it should not be subordinated to social, moral and political goals. They reaffirmed the Kantian doctrine of the autonomy of art, the idea that art has its own *sui generis* rules and values, independent of science, religion and morality. For just this reason, they have often been accused of political indifference, of escaping the social and political world and taking refuge in the ideal world of art.

One cannot, however, take the romantics' aestheticism entirely at face value. We must place it in the context of their moral, social and political concerns. For, although they insisted upon the autonomy of art, the romantics also stressed that art should be subordinate to the interests of humanity. The value of beauty, Novalis and Schlegel sometimes said, is that it serves as a symbol of the good. Paradoxically, they emphasized the autonomy of art because this made art a symbol of freedom. Art represents freedom, they argued, only if it is completely autonomous, not subordinate to any social or political ends.

The more we examine the context of early German Romanticism the more it becomes clear that its aesthetics and politics are inseparable. If its politics conforms to aesthetic ideals, its aesthetics fits its political ends. This interconnection becomes especially apparent from one of the central themes of early romantic political thought: 'the poetic state'. Novalis and Schlegel held that the perfect state is created and organized according to the ideal of beauty. The ruler of the poetic state is 'the artist of artists', 'the poet of poets', the

director of a vast public stage where all citizens are actors. Seen from a broader historical perspective, their poetic state is the very antithesis of Plato's republic. Here artists are not banished: they are enthroned. The romantics constantly invite us to reconsider Plato's famous question: what is the role of art in the state?

What drove the romantics to their poetic conception of the state? Why did they give such social and political importance to art? And what social and political purpose did their art serve? To answer these questions, we need to examine the romantics' reaction to two major developments of their time: the French Revolution, and the crisis of the German Enlightenment or *Aufklärung*.

The political ideals of the young romantics were formed in the 1790s, the decade in which all the problems and consequences of the Revolution became clear. Almost all of the romantics cheered the storming of the Bastille and celebrated the end of the *ancien régime*. They embraced the grand ideals of *liberté, égalité et fraternité*, defended the rights of man, and looked forward to the creation of a republic, 'the kingdom of God on earth'. Such enthusiasm was typical, of course, of most German intellectuals in the early 1790s. What is so striking about the romantics is the persistence of their optimism, which lasts into the late 1790s. Unlike so many of their contemporaries, they did not renounce the Revolution because of the September Massacres, the execution of Louis XVI, the invasion of the Rhineland or even the Terror. It is only around 1797 that they began to have deep reservations about the Revolution. Now they feared the social vacuum resulting from the wholesale destruction of traditional social institutions; they attacked the growing materialism and atheism in France; and they disapproved of the worst excesses of the mob. They started to recognize the need for some form of elite rule, and argued that the true republic should be a mixture of democracy, aristocracy and monarchy. Nevertheless, their increasing caution did not involve any abandonment of their basic political ideals. As late as 1800, Schlegel, Schleiermacher and Novalis continue to express republic sympathies. Indeed, their growing moderation was not especially conservative when measured by contemporary standards. Rather, it was typical of most German public opinion in the late 1790s; and it even mirrored the trend of opinion in France itself, where the most recent elections returned royalist majorities in the legislative councils.

Although the romantics approved of the principles of the Revolution, they disapproved of its practice. Like so many German intellectuals in the 1790s, they did not believe that fundamental social and political change could be achieved through violence or mass action from below. Rather, they stressed the need for gradual reform from above, reform led by a wise and responsible elite and adapted to the special conditions of a country. The continuing chaos and strife in France only strengthened their conviction that the French people, and *a fortiori* the German, were not ready for the high moral ideals of a republic. The main precondition for fundamental social and political change, they believed, is the education and enlightenment of the people.

As intellectuals in post-revolutionary Europe, the task of the young romantics was now cut out for them: to educate and enlighten the people, and so to prepare them for the grand moral ideals of a republic. Such was the aim of their common journal, the *Athenaeum*, which appeared from 1798 to 1800. The young romantics felt that, as intellectuals, they had moral and political responsibilities, and they had a deep faith in the power of ideas to effect social and political change. They were deeply influenced by Fichte's view, as set forth in his 1793 *Lectures on the Vocation of a Scholar*, that the role of the intellectual is to guide the progress of humanity. They endorsed Kant's famous adage that, if philosophers could not be kings, then at least kings should listen to philosophers; the only qualification they make to it is that philosophers should become artists.

We should place the romantics' aestheticism in the context of their reaction to the Revolution. Following Schiller's lead in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), they gave primacy to art because it is the chief tool for the education and enlightenment of the public in the post-revolutionary age. They believed that art, and art alone, can inspire the people to act according to the principles of reason, the high moral ideals of a republic. Although they agreed with Kant and Fichte that reason has the power *to know* our moral principles, they insisted that it does not have the power to make us *act* by them. The main springs of human action are impulse, imagination and passion, which only art can arouse and direct. If the people only receive an aesthetic education, which paints the principles of reason in attractive colours, then they will

feel motivated to act according to them. While reason is a harsh taskmaster, forcing us to repress our feelings and desires, art is an inspiring mistress, awakening our feelings and guiding them in a moral direction. If art only has its way, it will unify the two sides of our nature, reason and sensibility, so that we will then do our duty *from* and not *against* our inclinations. In sum, then, art became important for the young romantics because they saw it as the chief means of realizing their moral and political ideals: the liberty, equality and fraternity of a republic.

The romantics' aestheticism grew out of not only their reaction to the Revolution, but also their response to the crisis of the Enlightenment or *Aufklärung*. The *Aufklärung* had made reason its highest authority, its final court of appeal. Nothing could escape the scrutiny of reason: *all* moral, religious and political beliefs were subject to criticism, and abruptly dismissed if they lacked sufficient evidence. By the late 1790s, however, some of the critics of the *Aufklärung* – J. G. Hamann, F. H. Jacobi and Justus Möser – had made clear some of the disturbing consequences of such a ruthless rationalism. If reason had shown itself to be an omnipotent *negative* force, capable of destroying everything, it had also proved itself to be an impotent *positive* force, incapable of creating anything. Where the state, the church, nature and the community once stood, there was now only a vacuum. If modern individuals were rational and free, they were also rootless, attached to nothing, and without faith or allegiance. They had lost their bonds with the community, since reason condemned all its laws and customs as antiquated and oppressive. They also had lost their feeling for nature, because reason had deprived it of all mystery, magic and beauty. Finally, they had lost their religious faith, since reason had declared it to be nothing more than mythology. Sensing this condition of loss and rootlessness, Novalis stated that philosophy originates in 'homesickness' (*Heimweh*), the urge to feel at home again in a demystified world.

Though worried by the negative consequences of the *Aufklärung*, the young romantics resisted irrationalism. Unlike Burke or de Maistre, they did not defend the value of 'prejudice', nor did they advocate any return to 'the wisdom of our ancestors'. They valued the critical power of reason because it liberated the individual from all the fetters of custom and convention. Rather than laying down

restraints on reason, they even advocated taking criticism to its limits, regardless of tender consciences and personal convictions. Nevertheless, their strong endorsement of reason was tempered by a clear recognition of its limits. Since the demand that we criticize *all* our beliefs is self-reflexive, applying to criticism itself, they stressed that a completely critical reason is self-conscious, aware of its limits. A fully self-conscious reason will acknowledge the vacuum it creates yet cannot fill.

The romantics' ambivalent reaction to the crisis of the *Aufklärung* – their recognition of reason's powers *and* limits – left them with a very disturbing dilemma. How is it possible to fill the vacuum left by reason without betraying reason? How is it possible to restore unity with nature and the community without forfeiting the freedom that comes with criticism? Their middle path between this dilemma was their aestheticism. They believed that art, and art alone, could fill the vacuum left by reason. If reason is essentially a negative power, art is basically a positive one. While reason can only criticize, art can create. For the instrument of art is the imagination, which has the power to produce an entire world. The romantics built upon one of Kant's and Fichte's fundamental insights: that we live in a world that we create; they add to it only that our creation should be a work of art. That is the sum and substance of their famous 'magical idealism'.

One reason the romantics were persuaded of the powers of art is that, unlike the old customs, laws and religion, it has the power to incorporate yet withstand criticism. Art stands on a higher plateau than reason because its products are the result of play, of self-conscious semblance, whereas reason takes every proposition literally and seriously, because it treats it as a claim to truth. Thanks to irony, the romantic artist can distance himself from his creations and free himself to create anew. Although any one of his creations is bound to be limited and flawed, none of them perfectly represents his powers and energy, which are unbounded and ready to create again. Thus the artist internalizes yet transcends rational criticism.

The task of romantic art, then, was *to create* on a sophisticated, self-conscious level that unity with nature and society that had once been *given* on a naive subconscious level to primitive man. If only we make nature, society and the state beautiful, magical and mysterious again, the young romantics believed, then we will restore

our sense of belonging to them. Cured of our homesickness, we will finally feel at home again in our world.

Romantic religion and politics

By the early 1800s religion had replaced art at the pinnacle of the romantic hierarchy of values. Now it was religion that was the key to *Bildung*, the mainspring of cultural renewal, and the *raison d'être* of social and political life. In the spring of 1799 Schleiermacher, Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis all wrote of the need to create a new religion, or at least to go back to the roots of all religion. They demanded a new Bible, which would not give rise to the idolatry, prejudice and superstition of the past; and they called for a new church, whose sole foundation would be the brotherhood of the spirit rather than the coercion of the state. Such are the guiding ideals behind Schlegel's *Ideas*, Schleiermacher's *Monologues* and Novalis' *Christianity or Europe*.

However, religion did not completely eclipse art as the source of romantic inspiration. The romantics did not abandon their aestheticism but simply transformed it. They now cast art in a new role as the handmaiden to religion. If they once made a religion out of art, they now made religion into an art. They stressed that poetry is the 'organon' of religion, the means of its expression and criterion of its inspiration. So, if art must be sacred, religion must be beautiful. Nevertheless, despite their abiding aestheticism, the romantics now gave pride of place to religion, because they saw it as the *source* of artistic inspiration. It is as if they now recognize that, in making the world divine, mysterious and beautiful again, the artist is reviving the age-old function of the priest.

Liberal and socialist critics of Romanticism have often contended that its religious revival was the basis for its conservative or reactionary politics. In attempting to revive religion, the romantics, it seems, were reacting against the ideals of the Revolution and the progressive tendencies of the *Aufklärung*. As evidence for this point, these critics cite the notorious sympathies for, or even conversions to, the Roman Catholic church among some of the romantics.

There is indeed some element of truth in this criticism. In their later years, Friedrich Schlegel, Franz Baader and Adam Mueller appealed to religion to defend the monarchy, aristocracy and