NICHOLAS HALMI

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To Raimonda Modiano

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Acknowledgements

In a lecture on the concept of the symbol in the humanities, Ernst Cassirer observed that when he first encountered the Warburg Library, he experienced it not only as a collection of books but as a collection of the questions with which he himself had long been preoccupied. In my case the collection of questions presented by the concept of the symbol in Romanticism has demanded visits to several collections of books. I am grateful, therefore, to the staffs of the British Library, the Getty Research Institute, and the libraries of Cornell University, Harvard University, the University of Toronto, and the University of Washington for their assistance, as well as to the numerous booksellers who relieved me of the need to visit yet more libraries.

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Abbreviations

GA   Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche*, ed. Ernst Beutler, 27 vols. (Zürich: Artemis, 1948–71)

KA   *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, gen. ed. Ernst Behler, 32 vols. to date (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958–)

SW   F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, 14 vols. (Stuttgart, 1856–61)

As is customary, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is cited by the page numbers of the first (1781) or second (1787) edition, e.g. A226 or B278; and the constituent parts of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, gen. ed. Kathleen Coburn, 34 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969–2002), are cited individually by title and editor. Unless otherwise indicated, biblical quotations are from the Authorized (King James) Version and translations from other texts are mine.

1

Defining the Romantic Symbol

> Le seul nom de Symbolisme est déjà une énigme pour mainte
> personne. Il semble fait pour exciter les mortels à se tourmenter
> l'esprit. J'en ai connu qui méditaient sans fin sur ce petit mot
> de *symbole*, auquel ils attribuaient une profondeur imaginaire,
> et dont ils essayaient de se préciser la mystérieuse résonance.
>
> <div align="right">Paul Valéry, 'Existence du symbolisme'</div>

This is a study of a distinctive concept of the symbol articulated by
a number of German writers and by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in
the period conventionally designated the age of Goethe in German
literary history and the Romantic period in British literary histo-
ry, the years falling between 1770 and 1830. This is not a study
of poetic imagery. The albatross of Coleridge's ballad *The Rime of
the Ancient Mariner* and the blue flower of Novalis's novel *Heinrich
von Ofterdingen* may be called Romantic symbols, but not of the
kind to which I am referring. What I am referring to was strictly
a theoretical construct, the purpose of which, I shall argue, was
not to describe objects of perception but to condition the per-
ception of objects. In the symbol, according to Johann Wolfgang
Goethe's canonical formulation of the concept, the particular repre-
sents 'the universal, not as a dream or shadow, but as a living and
momentary revelation of the inscrutable [*lebendig-augenblickliche
Offenbarung des Unerforschlichen*]'. Consequently, 'the idea remains
eternally and infinitely active and inaccessible [*wirksam und uner-
reichbar*] in the image, and even if expressed in all languages would
still remain inexpressible [*selbst in allen Sprachen ausgesprochen, doch*

unauspprechlich bliebe]'.[1] On the one hand the symbol was supposed to be the point of contact between the contingent and the absolute, the finite and the infinite, the sensuous and the supersensuous, the temporal and the eternal, the individual and the universal. On the other hand it was supposed to refer to nothing but itself, so that image and idea were inherently and inseparably connected in it. In short, it was supposed to be at once infinitely meaningful and incapable of being reduced to any particular meaning.

Students of modernist literature will recognize this concept, for it persisted under the name *symbol* into twentieth-century criticism. Although the Romantics' influence on W. B. Yeats, for example, was probably mostly indirect, mediated through his friend Arthur Symons's appreciation of the French *symboliste* writers of the second half of the nineteenth century, the Yeats of 1903 could easily be mistaken (as we shall see) for the Coleridge of 1816, not only in defining the symbol as he did, but also in distinguishing it from allegory: 'A symbol is indeed the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame; while allegory is one of many possible representations of an embodied thing, and belongs to fancy and not to imagination: the one is a revelation, the other an amusement.'[2] It was precisely this adherence to the supposed prejudices of Romanticism that the critic Walter Benjamin, in his study of the German Baroque mourning play, was to criticize in Yeats.[3] Yet the Romantic valorization of the symbol at the expense of allegory did not lose its force in later criticism, as the following two citations will demonstrate. In 1929 D. H. Lawrence insisted that to fix

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[1] Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen* (1827), nos. 314 and 1113, *GA* ix. 523, 639.

[2] Yeats, 'William Blake and His Illustrations to the *Divine Comedy*', in *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 116–45, at 116. Originally published in *The Savoy* in 1896, Yeats's essay was reprinted in his *Ideas of Good and Evil* in 1903, and this later version of the text is reprinted in turn in *Essays and Introductions*. Cf. Hazard Adams, *Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1983), 140–50.

[3] Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (1928), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1972–89), i. 203–430, at 339: 'Even great artists and uncommon theorists like Yeats persist in the assumption that allegory is a conventional relation between a signifying image and its referent.'

the meaning of a symbol is to 'fall into the commonplace of allegory', and in 1967 W. H. Auden repeated this sentiment: 'analysis always tends to reduce symbolism to a false and boring allegory'.[4] One may also argue, as indeed I have elsewhere, that vestiges of the Romantic concept of the symbol, irrespective of its differentiation from allegory, play important methodological roles in the oneirology of Freud, the archetypal criticism of Northrop Frye, and even the 'immanent critique' of Benjamin, notwithstanding his explicit rejection of the concept.[5]

But to ask what this symbol is or was in actuality is to conflate the concept with the phenomenon. The few examples offered by the Romantics themselves are invariably inadequate to the concept, and sometimes indistinguishable from conventional tropes. When Coleridge informed his audience in a lecture of 1819, 'Here comes a *Sail*—that is, a Ship, is a symbolical Expression', he told them no more than they would have found in a rhetorical handbook under the entry for synecdoche.[6] August Wilhelm Schlegel maintained that the Greek gods were symbols because they had a 'reality independent of concepts', but his explanations of them were purely conceptual: 'The Titans in general signify the dark, mysterious primal forces of nature and the mind … The Furies are the dreadful powers of conscience. … Pallas is sober wisdom, justice, and temperance.'[7] Assuming the ideal to have a material substrate, Schelling taught that Mary Magdalen was a specifically symbolic figure because she 'not only *signifies* repentance but is living repentance itself'; but the instantly viewed universal had been common in, indeed integral to,

[4] Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, ed. Mara Kalnins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 101; Auden, *Secondary Worlds* (1968; London: Faber, 1984), 28.

[5] See 'Why Coleridge Was Not a Freudian', *Dreaming: Journal of the Association for the Study of Dreams*, 7 (1997), 13–28; 'The Metaphysical Foundation of Frye's Monadology', in Jeffery Donaldson and Alan Mendelson (eds.), *Frye and the Word: Religious Contexts in the Writings of Northrop Frye* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 97–104; and 'Walter Benjamin's Unacknowledged Romanticism', *Lingua Humanitatis,* 2 (2002), 163–82.

[6] Coleridge, *Lectures 1808–1819: On Literature*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), ii. 414–20, at 417 (notes for lecture of 25 March 1819). Cf. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 8. 6. 19–22.

[7] Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (1811), lect. 6, *Kritische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Edgar Lohner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1962–74), v. 72–87, at 81.

allegorical narrative until the Enlightenment.[8] Were we, therefore, to try to isolate and analyse the symbol as such, we should find ourselves in a position analogous to that of Pompey the Great when, after invading Jerusalem in 63 BC, he entered the innermost chamber of the Temple in Jerusalem—a chamber forbidden to all but the high priests—in the expectation of seeing the God of the Jews. What he found, of course, was an empty room.

To the extent that theory should call into question what has previously been taken for granted, a new theory of the Romantic symbol can advance upon its predecessors only by asking whether that object was not first constituted by the very act of describing it. This possibility has not been entertained even by theorists as incisive as Walter Benjamin and Paul de Man. Though unusual among their respective contemporaries in denouncing the Romantics, both were entirely typical in assuming (1) that the concept of the symbol was elaborated to account for an existing semiotic phenomenon, (2) that this phenomenon possesses an historically constant set of defining characteristics, and (3) that these characteristics would have been as recognizable to the Romantics as they are to us. In so far as the Romantics are understood to have maintained the essential identity of certain logically distinct categories—being and meaning, signifier and signified, art and nature, etc.—these assumptions limit the range of possible conclusions about their concept of the symbol to a pair of alternatives: it is either an accurate description of something that defies rational explanation, or a mystified description of something that can be comprehended rationally. According to the first, the object described is irrational; according to the second, the description itself is.

But that both alternatives bring the explanatory process to an end does not in itself compel us to choose between them. Since they are founded on the same premise, it might be possible to withhold a final judgement and instead continue the process on a different premise. That is, by hypothesizing two types of rationality, one

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[8] Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst* (1802–3), §87, *SW* v. 555. On self-instantiation and allegory see A. D. Nuttall, *Two Concepts of Allegory: A Study of Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' and the Logic of Allegorical Expression* (London: Routledge, 1967), ch. 2, from which I take the phrase 'instantially viewed universal'.

of function in addition to one of content, we could conceivably identify circumstances in which it is rational precisely not to be rational. Thus the question be answered would no longer be whether Romantic theorizing about the symbol was necessarily or gratuitously irrational—a question whose answer would in any event be little more than an expression of sympathy or antipathy to the Romantics—but whether its irrationality did not serve some purpose for which reason was inadequate. In other words, what intellectual and social purposes might the concept of the symbol have served the Romantics? An answer to this question could not presuppose that an object corresponding to that concept ever existed.

Once the existence of the symbol itself can no longer be assumed, then neither can the semiotic function of the concept. This does not mean that it did not have such a function (although I do not in fact believe it did), but simply that neither this nor any other function can be inferred automatically from the fact that in the course of the nineteenth century 'the word "symbol" tends to supplant other denominations for figural language, including that of "allegory" '.[9] Thus the first problem that Romantic symbolist theory poses for its interpreter is not semiotic but historical. By substituting a diachronic, genealogical mode of interpretation for the synchronic, analytic mode that has dominated previous discussion of the subject, I seek to avoid assuming the conformity of my object of study to a single disciplinary perspective, whether the discipline be literary history, literary theory, philosophy, theology, the history of science, or anything else. Even if it were true that, as M. H. Abrams maintains of Coleridge, the term *symbol* was restricted in its application to objects in nature and sacred scripture, that restriction would still leave open the question of the concept's role in its historical context.[10]

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[9] Paul de Man, 'The Rhetoric of Temporality', in C. S. Singleton (ed.), *Interpretation: Theory and Practice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 173–209, at 173. Although a German translation of the first part of this article appeared contemporaneously under the title 'Allegorie und Symbol in der europäischen Frühromantik' in Stefan Sonderegger (ed.), *Typologia litterarum* (Zürich: Atlantis, 1969), 403–25, its influence on German discussions of the subject has been, as far as I can tell, negligible.

[10] See Abrams, 'Coleridge and the Romantic Vision of the World', in *The Correspondent Breeze: Essays on English Romanticism* (New York: Norton, 1984), 192–224, at 221.

Now semiotics is interested in previous definitions of the symbol only to the extent that they can assist it in formulating its own definition. That is the basis on which de Man judged the Romantics obfuscatory and sought to restrict the application of the term *symbol* to tropes in which image and meaning are analogically related. Of course the difficulty and importance of such definition must not be underestimated, especially in the case of the symbol. When the contributors to André Lalande's philosophical dictionary undertook this task, the result was what Umberto Eco calls 'one of the most pathetic moments in the history of philosophical terminology': not only does the article 'Symbole' itself contain three mutually exclusive definitions, but the appended discussion among the contributors adds a further eight.[11] To be of any practical use, a definition must be applicable to a single semiotic phenomenon, but in many different cultural contexts. (Eco accordingly criticizes Tzvetan Todorov for trying to accommodate all the different medieval and modern definitions, thus rendering the symbolic indistinguishable from the semiotic in general.)[12] What Eco himself defines as the symbolic is supposed to be identifiable in Neoplatonic negative theology, Kabbalistic hermeneutics, German Romantic philosophy, French *symboliste* poetry, and deconstructive literary criticism: a mode of producing or interpreting a text so as to preserve its literal meaning while suggesting its possession of another, indeterminate meaning. Precisely because this meaning is indeterminate, the interpretive process required to identify it is, in theory, endless. One can never know if one has finally got the right meaning, or all of it.

From the perspective of semiotics all instances of the symbolic mode are systematically equivalent, so that it makes no difference whether the unlimited semiosis encouraged by the mode is directed towards discovering a transcendent truth or towards keeping professors busy for a hundred years, as Joyce is supposed to have averred was his goal in writing *Ulysses*. In either case interpretation is legitimated by what Eco calls a 'theology', even if it is 'the atheistic theology of unlimited

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[11] Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 130–1. Eco is referring to Lalande's frequently reprinted *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* (Paris: Alean, 1926).

[12] Eco, *Semiotics*, 137, referring to Todorov's *Théories du symbole* (Paris: Seuil, 1977) and *Symbolisme et interprétation* (Paris: Seuil, 1978).

semiosis or of hermeneutics as deconstruction'.[13] Indifference to the content of these legitimating theologies is the condition that enables semiotics to construct an abstract model of the symbolic mode, and thus to support its claim to explain human semiotic activity from a unified and coherent point of view; but it is also the condition that prevents semiotics from being an instrument of historical understanding. Existing concepts of the symbol can be used but not explained semiotically, for the theoretical object of a semiotic approach to the symbol is the symbol itself. Although de Man considered 'historical clarification' to be a prerequisite to the systematic study of figurative language, he in fact subordinated the interests of the former to those of the latter in his assessment of the Romantics: having posited his own definition of the symbol as demystified, he was bound to reject the Romantic definition as the opposite.

A subtler example of this subordination of interests occurs in Eco's presentation of the secular symbolic mode, with its 'atheistic theology of unlimited semiosis', as a *secularized* form of the religious, secularization consisting in the transplantation or migration of something essentially religious (or at least theological) from its original context to a secular context.[14] For Eco is confusing identities of systematic function with those of ideological content when he assumes that the legitimating strategies of the symbolic are all essentially theological. Confusion of this kind only contributes to the widespread misunderstanding, which I try to rectify in Chapter 4, of the Romantic (and particularly Coleridgean) concept of the symbol as a figment of Christian theology.

I may have contributed to that misunderstanding myself when I proposed some years ago that the Romantics developed the concept of the symbol to compensate for allegory's loss of numinousness at the hands of Enlightenment critics. (By numinousness I mean the ability to suggest the presence of hidden meaning.) That is, once

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[13] Eco, *Semiotics*, 163. Joyce's remark to Jacques Benoît-Méchin, one of his French translators, is recorded in Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce*, 2nd edn. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 521.

[14] Eco, *Semiotics*, 156–7.

allegory was conceived merely as a species of wit and a didactic instrument, it could no longer be regarded as the means by which the transcendent is revealed to humanity, and the symbol eventually emerged to take its place in performing this function.[15] The argument assumes exactly what I should now want to question, a functional continuity between allegory and the symbol. To be sure, however, the Romantics themselves encouraged this assumption by contrasting the two modes of representation as if one were simply an alternative to the other. And it is not difficult to pursue this line of reasoning to the conclusion that the Romantics developed their symbolist theory solely to mystify what in fact was allegorical practice, in which respect the theory constitutes 'a veil thrown over a light one no longer wishes to perceive'—the light being, in de Man's understanding, the inability of a sign to coincide with a meaning that is always anterior to it.[16] But as will become evident in a moment, the Romantics could not have suppressed that insight which de Man claimed to have recovered. Like the classical rhetoricians from whom they inherited the basic definition of allegory as a continuous metaphor or trope of sentences in which 'one thing is related, and another understood', Enlightenment critics postulated the *simultaneous* development of narrative and meaning.[17] If they emphasized the disjunction of literal narrative and figurative meaning in allegory, it was not because they considered the meaning irrecoverably anterior to the narrative but, on the contrary, because they wanted the literal to be subordinated as completely as possible to the figurative.

Allegory first began to be considered as a literary genre, rather than as a rhetorical figure, in Enlightenment aesthetics. With the notable exceptions of Robert Lowth, who referred to the typological interpretation of the Old Testament as 'mystical allegory', and Johann Gottfried Herder, who used the term *allegory* as a synonym for *natural symbol*, Enlightenment critics conceived allegory as a

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[15] Nicholas Halmi, 'From Hierarchy to Opposition: Allegory and the Sublime', *Comparative Literature*, 44 (1992), 337–60.

[16] De Man, 'Rhetoric', 191.

[17] The quotation is from John Hughes, *An Essay on Allegorical Poetry* (1715), in W. H. Durham (ed.), *Critical Essays of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915), 86–104, at 88. This definition may be traced back to Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 8. 6. 44.

narrative that refers to a meaning outside itself, just as, according to Lockean psychology, the mind organizes within itself ideas derived from impressions of a world external to itself.[18] Because allegory communicates by what were invidiously designated 'artificial signs' (about which I shall say more in the next chapter), it risks confusing or deceiving the reader—that is, it risks inducing a condition analogous to madness—unless the narrative it presents to the eye is strictly and transparently separate from the meaning it presents to the intellect. Hence the widespread disapproval, among eighteenth-century critics, of Milton's inclusion of the characters Sin and Death in the non-allegorical narrative of *Paradise Lost*, and the widespread confinement of allegory, among eighteenth-century poets, to didactic and satirical literature. 'This of *Sin* and *Death* is very exquisite in its kind', Joseph Addison judged, 'if not considered as Part of such a Work'. Other critics, like Samuel Johnson, were less charitable.[19]

We when we encounter Coleridge's well-known definition of allegory as 'the employment of agents and images … so as to convey, while we disguise, either moral qualities or conceptions of the mind that are not in themselves objects of the Senses', we are apt to accept it unquestioningly because it (1) closely resembles the definitions offered by other critics of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and (2) posits an arbitrary and supposedly demystified relation between image and referent.[20] Yet precisely because Coleridge's definition is so conventional, it must be recognized as the manifestation

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[18] See Lowth's *De sacra poesi Hebræorum*, lect. 11 (Oxford, 1753), 96–101; *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, trans. G. Gregory (London, 1787), i. 235–49. On Herder see Bengt Algot Sørensen, *Symbol und Symbolismus in den ästhetischen Theorien des 18. Jahrhunderts und der deutschen Romantik* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), ch. 5.

[19] Addison, *Spectator*, no. 357 (19 Apr. 1712), ed. D. F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), iii. 329–39, at 336; Johnson, 'Milton' (1779), in *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; with Critical Observations on Their Works*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), i. 242–95, at 291 (and see Lonsdale's commentary): 'Milton's allegory of Sin and Death [in *Paradise Lost*, 2. 648–889] is undoubtedly faulty. … That Sin and Death should have shewn the way to hell, might have been allowed; but they cannot facilitate the passage by building a bridge, because the difficulty of Satan's passage is described as real and sensible, and the bridge ought to be only figurative.' For further examples of such criticism see Halmi, 'From Hierarchy to Opposition', 345 n. 8.

[20] Coleridge, *Lectures 1808–1819: On Literature*, ii. 99–103, at 99 (notes for lecture of 3 Feb. 1818).

of a historically specific critical attitude, the effect of which was to increase the attractiveness of other modes of representation, or for that matter other conceptions of allegory itself. It was this definition from which Goethe and the painter Heinrich Meyer first distinguished the symbol, in jointly planned but separately written essays of 1797–8, each entitled 'On the Subjects of Figurative Art'. Unlike Goethe, Meyer published his essay, in which, by distinguishing symbolic art as unifying expression and meaning, he implicitly advanced the symbol as a kind of non-discursive representation, such as the critic Karl Philipp Moritz had referred to recently in his essay 'The Signature of the Beautiful'.²¹ Goethe's later, better-known distinctions between the symbol as intuitive and allegory as discursive (e.g. in *Maxims and Reflections*) followed chronologically and to a large extent conceptually the more theoretically significant elaborations by Schelling, Schelling's disciple Friedrich Ast, the linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt, and the critic K. W. F. Solger. (The assimilability in many respects of Goethe's reflections on the symbol to those of his younger contemporaries accounts for my departure in this book from the normal practice in *Germanistik* of respecting his own disinclination to be identified with the Romantics.) In England, probably influenced by a passing reference in A. W. Schlegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, Coleridge opposed symbol and allegory in terms similar to those used by the German Romantics.²²

What was at issue in the Romantic discussion of the symbol was certainly not the adequacy, let alone intolerable clarity, of the Enlightenment conception of allegory. For otherwise the Romantics could scarcely have accepted as an objective description of allegory what their predecessors had laid down as rules for allegorical

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²¹ The essays of both Goethe and Meyer are anthologized in Sørensen's *Allegorie und Symbol: Texte zur Theorie des dichterischen Bildes im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a.M.: Athenäum, 1972), and a translation of Goethe's essay is appended to Adams's *Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic*, 395–7. For 'Die Signatur des Schönen' (1788), which does not itself use the term *Symbol*, see Moritz's *Schriften zur Ästhetik und Poetik*, ed. Hans Joachim Schrimpf (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962), 93–103.

²² See Nicholas Halmi, 'Coleridge's Most Unfortunate Borrowing from A. W. Schlegel', in Christoph Bode and Sebastian Domsch (eds.), *British and European Romanticisms* (Trier: WVT, 2007), 131–42. For a balanced discussion of Coleridge's various statements concerning allegory, see John Gatta, 'Coleridge and Allegory', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 38 (1977), 62–77.

writers to follow. I want to emphasize this point by juxtaposing the following two passages, chosen to illustrate the prevailing attitude rather than the personal influence of one writer upon another. The nineteenth-century passage is from Hegel: 'The opposite of the riddle is … allegory. Although it too seeks to make particular features of a general concept more capable of being perceived by means of related features of sensuously concrete objects … it does so with exactly the opposite goal of achieving the utmost clarity, so that the external object [*Äußerlichkeit*] it uses must be of the greatest possible transparency to the meaning that is to appear in it.'[23] The eighteenth-century text is from the English poet and translator John Hughes: 'That the Allegory be clear and intelligible, the Fable being design'd only to clothe and adorn the Moral, but not to hide it, should methinks resemble the Draperies we admire in some of the ancient Statues; in which the Folds are not too many, nor too thick, but so judiciously order'd, that the Shape and Beauty of the Limbs may be seen thro them.'[24]

Even the Romantic disparagement of allegory, though demanded by the logic of its opposition to the symbol, was by no means novel. Early in the eighteenth century Jean-Baptise Dubos no sooner praised allegory's didactic power than conceded its inevitable dullness.[25] Late in the century Hugh Blair, whose Edinburgh lectures on rhetoric were reprinted a dozen times and translated into four foreign languages by 1804, observed that 'there are few species of composition in which it is more difficult to write so as to please and command attention, than in Allegories'.[26] These diminished expectations of allegory produced their own fulfilment—namely the general confinement of allegory to didactic works and political satires—and account for the hostile reception of the antiquarian Johann Joachim Winkelmann's attempt to defend the necessity and aesthetic value of allegorical representation

[23] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (1828), in *Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), xiii. 511.

[24] Hughes, *Essay*, 100–1. For further examples of such rules see Halmi, 'From Hierarchy to Opposition', 345–6 and n. 9.

[25] Dubos, *Réflexions critiques sur la Poësie et sur la Peinture*, 6th edn. (Paris, 1755), i. 226–8: 'Quant aux actions allégoriques … on peut s'en servir avec succès dans les Fables & dans plusieurs autres ouvrages qui sont destinés pour instruire l'esprit en le divertissant. … D'ailleurs il est impossible qu'une pièce, dont le sujet est une action allégorique, nous intéresse beaucoup.'

[26] Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 2nd edn. (London, 1785), i. 399.

in the visual arts.²⁷ So although it is perfectly true that the some of the Romantics used the concept of allegory as a foil for that of the symbol, as Benjamin insisted, they did not need to invent a concept for that purpose.²⁸ They had only to adopt the one that lay before them in eighteenth-century aesthetic treatises.

Important as the concept of the symbol itself was in Romantic thought, its opposition to allegory was in fact, contrary to the impression fostered by the preoccupation of twentieth-century critics with the subject, neither widely nor consistently maintained. That Goethe affirmed the opposition did not prevent him from being receptive to Winckelmann's ideas about allegory in ancient art; that Schelling and Coleridge did so did not prevent them from admiring allegorical writers, particularly Dante. A. W. Schlegel, as we have seen, labelled the gods of classical myth symbolic while interpreting them as if they were, by his own definition, allegorical—that is, personified abstractions with fixed meanings—and eventually, in the spirit of linguistic patriotism, he abandoned the two 'foreign' labels altogether for the single, authentically German word *Sinnbild*, which translates literally as 'sensuous image'. His brother Friedrich, whose patriotic inclinations found a less benign outlet, often used the terms *symbol* and *allegory* synonymously, as did Ludwig Tieck. Others distinguished them along the vertical rather than the horizontal axis of taxonomical classification, Arthur Schopenhauer treating the symbol as a species of allegory, Solger (according to the posthumously published transcript of his lectures on aesthetics) treating allegory as a species of symbol. In his dialogue *Erwin*, published in his lifetime, Solger followed Schelling, to the detriment of his conceptual clarity, in distinguishing symbol and allegory both generically *and* historically. (In the last chapter I shall consider this confusion of classificatory schemata in connection with Schelling's idea of a 'new mythology'.) For his part

²⁷ Winckelmann, *Versuch einer Allegorie* (Dresden, 1766). Cf. Carl Justi, *Winckelmann und seine Zeitgenossen*, 3rd edn. (Leipzig: Vogel, 1923), iii. 281–96.

²⁸ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 337: 'Classicism [in the specifically German sense, here referring primarily to Goethe] develops simultaneously with the concept of the profane symbol its speculative counterpart, the concept of the allegorical. A genuine theory of allegory did not emerge at that time, nor had one existed previously. It is nonetheless legitimate to describe the new concept of allegory as speculative, for it was in fact chosen [*abgestimmt*] to be the dark background against which the world of the symbol would stand out brightly.'

Hegel retained only the historical distinction, identifying the art of ancient Egypt and India as symbolic: this lack of interest in the contemporary viability of the symbol is the reason for his almost complete absence from the present study. Since my purpose here is to demonstrate that the formation of the Romantic concept of the symbol was *not* crucially dependent on a corresponding denigration of allegory, I shall not prolong this survey but proceed to state the conclusions that may be drawn from it.[29]

First, the Romantics' hostility to allegory must not be exaggerated: what they objected to was not allegory in general, but allegory as defined and practised in the Enlightenment. Second, to the extent that they defined the symbol in opposition to allegory, they did so because allegory—in its restrictive Enlightenment conception—epitomized to them all that passed under the name of artificial signs: arbitrary, motivated, discursive, and contextually dependent representation. If the Middle Ages had possessed a *culture* of the sign, meaning a network of iconographic conventions and interpretive contexts whose ideological coherence was guaranteed by their reference to and assumed derivation from the divine Logos, then the Enlightenment possessed a *philosophy* of the sign, meaning the reductive analysis of culture in semiotic terms—and precisely in the absence of the ideological coherence that had characterized medieval culture.[30] Semiotics, like aesthetics a product of the Enlightenment, gave voice to the loss of certainty of which it was a consequence, the loss of certainty in a transcendental signified standing outside and ensuring the integrity of the order of signs. To redeem representation, for reasons that remain to be identified, from this corrosive scepticism about the conditions

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[29] For those who are interested in the various permutations of the distinction between symbol and allegory, I recommend the surveys by Todorov, *Théories du symbole*, 235–59; Sørensen, 'Symbol und Allegorie', in Manfred Lurker (ed.), *Beiträge zu Symbol, Symbolbegriff und Symbolforschung* (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1982), 171–80; Adams, *The Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic*, ch. 3; and esp. Michael Titzmann, 'Allegorie und Symbol im Denksystem der Goethezeit', in Walter Haug (ed.), *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), 642–65.

[30] I take the phrase 'culture of the sign' from Gordon Teskey, whose *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996) attributes the emergence of allegorical writing in the West to the semiotic assumptions of medieval culture.

of its possibility, the Romantics had to redefine those conditions, not epistemologically but—more fundamentally—ontologically.

When we consider more closely what the Romantics designated as symbols, we can hardly avoid the conclusion that they were seeking not to continue a philosophical aesthetics or semiotics by other means, but to transcend it altogether. According to Schelling, the category of the symbolic, as opposed to that of the schematic or the allegorical, embraces myth, organic nature, art, philosophy, sculpture, and drama.[31] What necessitates the inclusion of the last two items in this list is the use of one set of terms to classify concepts at different levels of generality, so that the class to which art as a whole is assigned is but one of three classes into which it can be subdivided. While sculpture and drama are included in the same class as their genus, other species of art are excluded from it: painting and epic poetry are classified as schematic, music and lyric poetry as allegorical (see Figure 1). In assuming the repeatability of a set of terms throughout his scheme, Schelling conflates two incommensurable relations, one quantitative and one qualitative: the species is conceived not only as *part* of its genus, but as *identical* to or *different* from it. In other words, the same relation that governs the horizontal development of the classificatory tree is now made to govern its vertical development as well. This absurdity is more readily appreciable in Figure 2, where Schelling's three categories—the symbolic, schematic, and allegorical—are reduced to the symbolic and non-symbolic.

　　To be sure, as Eco has shown, it is an inherent limitation of classificatory schemes like Schelling's, known as Porphyrian trees and consisting of hierarchical arrangements of genera and differentiae, the relation of which to one another is purely formal, that a set of differentiae can appear repeatedly under different genera.[32] The hierarchical order of the Porphyrian tree is strictly illusory because, its differentiae

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[31] Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, §39, *SW* v. 410–11. For a less involved summary of Schelling's scheme, see James Engell, *Forming the Critical Mind: Dryden to Coleridge* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 95–6. Titzmann, 'Allegorie und Symbol', 647–8, demonstrates (with corresponding tables) that the same kind of recursive logic, or rather illogic, underlies Solger's taxonomy of the symbol.

[32] Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, ch. 2. I shall return to this point at the beginning of the next chapter, in connection with the *Encyclopédie*.
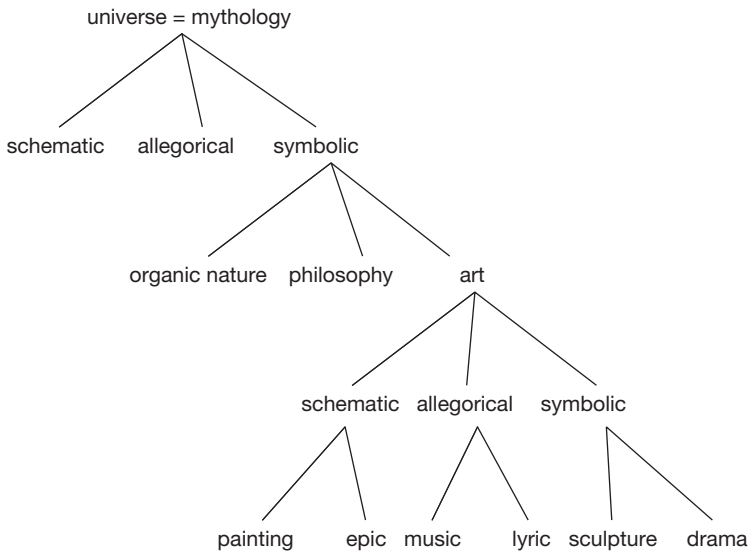
Figure 1.
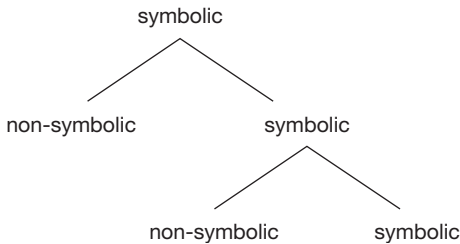
Figure 2.

being uncontainable, there is no guarantee of the tree's finiteness. But normally this limitation becomes evident only from a comparison of differing classifications of the same object, a fact that enables us to accept the validity of any given classificatory scheme considered in isolation. By undermining the logical integrity of his scheme on his own, Schelling thus renders obviously nugatory its value as a contribution to the systematic study of figurative language or of anything else; but he also prompts us to ask whether it was ever intended

to be such a contribution. Just here de Man failed to recognize the implication of his own insistence that the symbol can no longer 'be considered a "solution" to the problem of metaphorical diction'.[33]

To the extent that Schelling's faulty logic—which applies to his historical as well as to his systematic schemata—is typical of Romantic treatments of the symbol, it may be understood as the basis of an attempt to use a classificatory model to demonstrate the irrelevance of aesthetic classifications to the symbol. In order to comprehend this paradox, we must first recognize how radically the Romantic concept of the symbol differs from that with which it might seem to have most in common, the pseudo-Dionysian concept of the 'incongruous symbol' which reveals the divine in the form of the profane, the celestial in the form of the terrestrial: 'divina et caelestia … per dissimilia symbola manifestantur.'[34] The Romantic departure from the apophatic tradition may be divided, logically if not historically, into two stages. In the first, representation is grounded in participation; in the second, participation is equated with identity. Whereas the pseudo-Dionysius and his successors had defined the relation between the image and its referent as one of *dissimilarity*, the Romantics defined it as one of *partialness*: 'by a symbol', said Coleridge, 'I mean, not a metaphor or allegory or any other figure of speech, but an actual and essential part of that, the whole of which it represents.'[35]

From this one might conclude that the Romantic theory was a modern variant of the Gnostic, as opposed to Neoplatonic, doctrine of

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[33] De Man, 'Rhetoric', 176.

[34] I quote from Joannes Scotus Eriugena's translation of the second chapter of the pseudo-Dionysian *De caelesti hierarchia*, in Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1844–64), cxxii. 1039c; the Greek original is available in *La Hiérarchie céleste*, 2. 3. 141a, ed. Günter Heil and Maurice de Gandillac (Paris: Cerf, 1958), 79. On the concept of the *anomoion symbolon*—to which I return in Chapter 4—and its transmission to the Middle Ages in Eriugena's translation, see Jean Pépin, 'La Théorie du symbolisme dans la tradition dionysienne', in *La Tradition de l'allégorie de Philon d'Alexandrie à Dante* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1987), 199–221. In 1215 the fourth Lateran Council decreed that the similarity between the Creator and his creatures could not be greater than their dissimilarity: 'inter creatorem et creaturam non potest similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notando' (Heinrich Denziger and Adolf Schönmetzer (eds.), *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 36th edn. (Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 1975), 262).

[35] Coleridge, *Lay Sermons* (1816–17), ed. R. J. White (Princeton: Princeton University, 1972), 79.

emanation (*aporroia*), according to which the divine essence is present but quantitatively diminished in whatever emanates from it.[36] But such a conclusion would be premature. Gnosticism's emanationism was a consequence of its radical dualism, which had presented the problem of explaining how man could be saved by a God who had not even created him. Romanticism's symbolist theory, in contrast, was a consequence of its desire precisely to overcome dualism, as will be discussed in the second and third chapters of this book. By means of the conflation we observed already in Schelling's classificatory scheme, the Romantics could maintain that being a *part* of what it represents makes the symbol *identical* to that whole: 'Meaning here is simultaneously being itself, passed over into the object and one with it.'[37] This is what Coleridge meant when he called the symbol 'tautegorical'—expressing the same thing as itself—a neologism that Schelling later adopted enthusiastically in his lectures on mythology (with an acknowledgement that made light of the English writer's plagiarisms from him).[38]

When Hans-Georg Gadamer proposed that symbols must be humanly instituted (*gestiftet*) because their significance does not derive from their ontological content, he reversed the Romantic view that their significance not only derives from but is actually equivalent to that content. That he did so in order to clarify the ontological distinctiveness of the symbol also suggests what the Romantics sought

[36] Heinrich Dörrie, 'Emanation: Ein unphilosophisches Wort im spätantiken Denken', in Kurt Flasch (ed.), *Parusia: Festgabe für Johannes Hirschberger* (Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva, 1965), 129–41.

[37] Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, §39, *SW* v. 411. Although Schelling's lectures on the philosophy of art were not published till 1856, they were attended in 1802–3 by Henry Crabb Robinson, whose detailed notes Coleridge may (or may not) have seen: see Ernst Behler, 'Schellings Ästhetik in der Überlieferung von Henry Crabb Robinson', *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 83 (1976), 133–83, esp. 148–51.

[38] Coleridge, 'On the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus' (1825), in *Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), ii. 1251–301, at 1267–8; Schelling, *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie* (1842–8), lect. 8, *SW* xi. 175–98, at 195–6 and n. (See Nicholas Halmi, 'Greek Myths, Christian Mysteries, and the Tautegorical Symbol', *Wordsworth Circle*, 36 (2005), 6–8.) A more accessible definition appears in Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*, ed. John Beer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 206: '*tau*tegorical (i.e. expressing the *same* subject but with a *difference*) in contra-distinction from metaphors and similitudes, that are always *alle*gorical (i.e. expressing a *different* subject but with a resemblance).'

by denying it an instituted character: to extend the symbol's domain from aesthetics to the whole of reality. Gadamer has justly remarked that for Goethe 'the opposition between symbol and allegory in art theory is only a special instance of the general tendency towards significance [*das Bedeutende*] which he seeks in all phenomena', and the wider applicability of this remark is confirmed by Schelling's classification of organic nature (along with art) as symbolic.[39] More important than the differentiation of the symbolic from the allegorical or the schematic, then, was the definition of it in terms that made such differentiation irrelevant, as in Goethe's declaration that 'everything that happens is a symbol, and by fully representing itself refers to everything else', or as in Coleridge's proclamation that 'all that meets the bodily sense I deem|Symbolical', or yet as in Novalis's notes for his abortive encyclopedia project: 'Symbolism of the *human body*—of the animal world—of the plant world—(Everything can be a symbol of something else—symbolic function.)—*of nature*—of minerals—of atmospheric elements—of meteors—of stars—of sensations—thoughts—of souls—of history—of mathematics.'[40]

Such statements, which by universalizing the application of the term *symbol* deprive of it any specificity, are meaningless from the perspective of semiotics, according to which (as Eco reminds us) '*not everything can be a symbol*'.[41] But they are very meaningful from the perspective of intellectual history, in so far as that discipline seeks to identify the social functions of concepts in the contexts of their historical formation. The Romantics' claim that the symbol, defined as inherently and inexhaustibly meaningful, existed equally and equivalently in diverse ontological and temporal realms—art and nature, antiquity and modernity—indicates that the principal concern of their symbolist theory was not in identifying, still less in

[39] Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, in *Gesammelte Werke* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986–95), i. 82, 158–60.

[40] Goethe to K. E. Schubarth, 27 Apr. 1818, *GA* xxi. 286; Coleridge, 'The Destiny of Nations' (1817 version), ll. 18–19, in *Poetical Works*, ed. J. C. C. Mays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), i. 279–99, at 282; Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon* (1798–9), in *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe*, ed. Richard Samuel and Hans-Joachim Mähl (Munich: Hanser, 1978–82), ii. 637.

[41] Eco, *Semiotics*, 157 (emphasis in original).

interpreting, actual symbols, but instead in establishing an ideal of meaningfulness itself. Once it was determined that symbols did not have to be instituted—that is, they did not have not be recognized as symbols in order to function as such, or at least be declared to do so—then the concept of the symbol could be used as the theoretical justification of a disposition to discover meaning precisely where it was not intuitively evident: man, says Thomas Carlyle's Professor Teufelsdröckh,'every where finds himself encompassed with Symbols, recognised as such or not recognised'.[42] Naturalizing the symbol as a mode of representation in which being and meaning were one and the same was the prerequisite to making nature symbolic.

Theory is a reaction against self-evidence. If the world had been self-evidently meaningful to the Romantics, in the sense of being interpretively assimilable into a comprehensive and coherent structure of meaning whose relevance to humanity was beyond question, they would not have needed to claim that, on account of the identity of being and meaning, it cannot be anything but meaningful. The very ingeniousness of the demonstration, which as we shall see in Chapter 3 relied for its philosophical underpinning on Enlightenment organicism and Spinozan monism, betrays its function as a theoretical wish-fulfilment. Because any symbol must be recognized as one before it can be interpreted, Romantic symbolist theory had to be institutive rather than interpretive: it was itself the act of institution, or what Eco would call the act of textual production, that it denied its object. It is indicative of Goethe's affinity with the Romantics in this respect that a lyric from his *Sturm-und-Drang* period anticipated their characteristic view of nature as a collection of not-yet-interpreted symbols. In the 'Sendschreiben' of 1774, nature is described as a living book whose meaning is not understood, yet not impossible to understand: 'Sieh, so ist Natur ein Buch lebendig, | Unverstanden, doch nicht unverständlich.'

What was peculiar to the age of Goethe was certainly not its assumption of nature's meaningfulness to humanity, but rather its

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[42] Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (1833–4), 3. 3, ed. Kerry McSweeney and Peter Sabor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 166; cf. 168: 'It is in and through *Symbols* that man, consciously or unconsciously, lives, works, and has his being …'.

inability to secure any actual meaning from a purportedly infinite store of potential meaning. One way in which this peculiarity manifested itself was the emphasis on the mysteriousness of the language in which the book of nature was written. It was one thing to know *that* 'everything we experience is a communication', and something else entirely to know *what* was being communicated: 'The world's meaning has been lost,' lamented Novalis. 'We are left only with the letters.'[43] The obvious model for such a language was hieroglyphics, not only because its characters had yet to be deciphered at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but also because they had long been thought to have, on account of their pictorial quality, an inherent relation to the natural order of things.[44] Thus Coleridge, who sought to convince the English middle classes that 'True natural philosophy is comprized in the study of the science and language of *symbols*', observed that 'the vegetable creation' in its internal structure symbolizes the unity of nature and in its external variety 'inchases the vast unfolded volume of the earth with the hieroglyphics of her history'.[45] Novalis's reference to nature's hieroglyphics was more laconic: 'Once everything was a spiritual phenomenon [*Geisteserscheinung*]. Now we see nothing but dead repetition [*todte Wiederholung*], which we

[43] Novalis, [*Vorarbeiten zu verschiedenen Fragmentensammlungen*] (1798), fr. 316, *Werke*, ii. 383: 'Alles, was wir erfahren, ist eine *Mittheilung*. So ist die Welt in der That eine *Mittheilung*—Offenbarung des Geistes. Die Zeit ist nicht mehr, wo der Geist Gottes verständlich war. Der Sinn der Welt ist verlohren gegangen. Wir sind beym Buchstaben stehn geblieben.'

[44] See Lieselotte Dieckmann, *Hieroglyphics: The History of a Literary Symbol* (St Louis, MO.: Washington University Press, 1970); Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), ch. 5; Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. James Fentress (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 154–8, 162–8; and Thomas Singer, 'Hieroglyphs, Real Characters, and the Idea of Natural Language in English Seventeenth-century Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50 (1989), 49–60. Even eighteenth-century thinkers like Vico and William Warburton, who ascribed no arcane significance to hieroglyphs, assumed their primitiveness on the grounds that pictures must have preceded alphabetic characters in the development of language. (On the other hand, Diderot referred in the *Lettre sur les sourds et les muets* (1751) to all motivated signs in poetry, painting, and music as hieroglyphs, while Moritz used the term as a synonym for *allegory*: see Todorov, *Théories du symbole*, 166; and Sørensen, *Symbol und Symbolismus*, 83–4, as well as Ch. 5 below at n. 43.) Only in 1822 did Jean-François Champollion first succeed in deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphs.

[45] Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, 79, 73.

don't understand. The meaning of the hieroglyphics is missing.'[46] This insistence on nature's illegibility is all the more remarkable in following, by almost two centuries, Galileo's categorical assertion of the opposite.

That Galileo and the Romantics used the same metaphor to express their respective conceptions of nature attests to the continuity of its *use*, but not to that of its *content*: the two books were written in different languages. In his contribution to the controversy over the comets of 1618, Galileo maintained that although philosophy is to be found in that 'vast book which stands continuously open before our eyes'—namely the universe—'it cannot be understood until one learns the language and recognizes the characters in which it is written'. The obstacle to doing so was the belief, which Galileo detected in his opponents, that philosophical truth is founded on tradition rather than reason. Since it was inconceivable that the most rational of beings had failed to create the universe according to the most rational of principles, which could only be mathematical, that so-called book must have been written in the language of mathematics, whose characters are 'triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures'. Only if we fail to recognize that language do our attempts to understand nature lead us into a 'dark labyrinth'.[47] Mathematizing natural science would therefore secure for human reason the assurance that Galileo's telescopic discoveries had decisively denied to the senses: assurance of the world's complete accessibility. That the cosmos had long withheld some of its objects from our unaided view, and doubtless continued to withhold others, would become a matter of indifference when its fundamental principles were comprehended in their necessity and immutability.

Obviously, then, nature's comprehensibility to Galileo was different in kind from its incomprehensibility to the Romantics, and the protestations of the latter condition evince a discontent with the

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[46] Novalis, *Vorarbeiten*, fr. 104, *Werke*, ii. 334.

[47] Galilei, *Il saggiatore* (1623), §6, in *Opere*, ed. Franz Brunetti, 3rd edn. (1996; Turin: UTET, 1999), i. 631−2: 'La filosofia è scritta in questo grandissimo libro che continuamente ci sta aperto innanzi a gli occhi (io dico l'universo), ma non si può interderne se prima non s'impara a intender la lingua, e conoscer i caratteri, ne' quali è scritto. Egli è scritto in lingua matematica, e i caratteri son triangoli, cerchi, ed altre figure geometriche, senza i quali mezi … è un aggirarsi vanamente per un oscuro laberinto.'

former, which entailed, as I shall elaborate in the next chapter, the disenchantment of the world. Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* proceeded from the proposition that although the natural sciences (by which he meant mathematics, physics, and chemistry) teach us how to *read* nature, only philosophy teaches us how to *interpret* what we have read.[48] Detaching that proposition from its immediate context, we can redefine the difference between the two activities as follows: 'reading' posits the indifference of its objects to their observer, 'interpretation' their significance.

I use the term *significance* in a specific sense derived from Wilhelm Dilthey, in whose universalization of hermeneutics it pertained to the categories through which life is comprehended in its coherence. Because 'these categories are not applied a priori to life as something external to it, but reside in the essence of life itself', Dilthey taught, they are fundamentally different from the categories through which a knowledge of nature (*Naturerkennen*) is achieved.[49] The structural continuity of life manifests itself in the significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) of individual experiences, and the relation between these parts and the whole of life constitutes the comprehensive category of meaning (*Bedeutung*). Following from Dilthey and Heidegger, who identified significance with the world's 'worldhood' (*Weltlichkeit*), the philosophical anthropologist Erich Rothacker articulated a principle according to which 'the relation of significance is what first *constitutes* a comprehensible perceivable *world*'. Without this relation, 'perceptions are neutral and soulless'.[50]

The understanding of life satisfies what the knowledge of nature leaves unsatisfied, for it emerges not from an intersubjective, trans-historical process to which the individual's limited lifespan denies

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[48] Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797), *SW* ii. 6.

[49] Dilthey, *Plan der Fortsetzung zum Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914–), vii. 232–41. The categories of *Naturerkennen* are the twelve that Kant, in the transcendental analytic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B106), organized under the classes of quantity, quality, relation, and modality.

[50] Rothacker, *Zur Genealogie des menschlichen Bewusstseins*, ed. Wilhelm Perpeet (Bonn: Bouvier, 1966), 46: 'Ohne Bedeutsamkeitsbezug sind auch Anschauungen neutral und seelenlos. Erst der Bedeutsamkeitsbezug *konstituiert* eine verständliche anschauliche *Welt*.' Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §18 (1927; Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), 83–9, at 87–8.

him or her more than partial access, but instead from the individual's own experience. And significance is the quality that makes this understanding possible: 'Only in a "world" constituted by relations of significance [*Bedeutsamkeitsbezüge*] can empty insights into things [*leere Sacheinsichten*] again become serviceable to life.'[51] In other words, Wordsworth's to be exact, significance is what lightens 'the heavy and the weary weight | Of all this unintelligible world'.[52] But while significance is, as Rothacker pointed out, 'always related to a subject to whom something appears significant', it for this very reason cannot be subjectively imparted to something: 'As a contrived valence [*ausgedachte Wertigkeit*], significance would have to break down.'[53] This means not that significance cannot in fact *be* purely subjective, but that to the subject in question it must not *seem* so. The force of its apparent objectivity is what renders significance impervious to the aspersions that rationality may cast upon it: knowing perfectly well, for instance, that the mass-produced and randomly distributed messages in fortune cookies can have no inherent relevance to my life has never prevented me from reading those messages as if they had exactly such relevance. Whatever its content, the message is always imprinted with significance.

Perhaps I can strengthen this important point about the nature of significance by referring to a Romantic poet who, like Wordsworth, did not address the concept of the symbol as such in his critical writings. In a remarkable reversal of the position of the modern mechanical philosophy, Percy Bysshe Shelley accused the world of theoretical objects of having exactly the kind of deceptiveness that theory accuses the world of sensory experience of having: the deceptiveness of self-evidence. When philosophy renounces the goal of systematic coherence for that of genuine insight, it will discover beneath 'the solid universe of external things' something wondrous and more useful for human self-comprehension: 'such stuff as dreams are made of'.[54] Shelley's emphasis here was not on imagination's power to transform

[51] Rothacker, *Genealogie*, 46.
[52] Wordsworth, 'Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey' (1798), ll. 40–1.
[53] Rothacker, *Genealogie*, 348; Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (1979; Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1984), 77.
[54] 'On Life' (1819), in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald Reiman and Neil Fraistat, 2nd edn. (New York: Norton, 2001), 505–9, at 506.

a world indifferent to human needs, but on the superficiality of that world in relation to the invisible but *already existing* one that, were it only fully recognized, would succeed in meeting those needs.

If the concept of a significant, as opposed to an indifferent, world had to await the development of an historicist philosophy of life for its theoretical elaboration, it had already found inchoate expression in Romanticism. Roughly two decades before Shelley adumbrated his own philosophy of life, another poet who was not to live beyond his twenty-ninth year had insisted that 'stones, trees, animals must speak in order for man to feel himself, to recollect himself'.[55] The role of philosophy and art alike in this context, and more particularly of the so-called 'new mythology' which I discuss in the final chapter, was to decipher nature's hieroglyphs so that humanity might find itself more truly and *less* strange. But that role was more easily defined than performed.

To summarize the argument: the theorization of the symbol in the Romantic period may be understood as an attempt, however illogical and methodologically dubious in itself, to foster a sense of the harmony of the human mind with nature, of the unity of seemingly disparate intellectual disciplines, and of the compatibility of individual freedom with a cohesive social structure—all for the sake of reducing anxiety about the place of the individual in bourgeois society (especially in the aftermath of the French Revolution and ensuing European wars) and about the increasing dominance of mechanistic science (which, by opposing mind to nature as subject to object, undermined the traditional basis on which the world's meaningfulness had been assumed). To the extent that it sought to effect a re-enchantment of the world by reforming perception, the symbolist theory of the philosophically minded Romantics, for the most part Germans, was closely related to the poetic project of English poets like Wordsworth and Shelley, who sought to reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary and thereby transform human understanding of the external world. Wordsworth's true affinity with the theorists of the symbol, including his collaborator on the *Lyrical Ballads*, lay not in his notion that tautologies and repeated words can act on the mind 'as *things*, active

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[55] Novalis, *Vorarbeiten*, fr. 214, *Werke*, ii. 360.

and efficient, which are themselves part of the passion', but in his view of the intellectual and moral purpose of poetry.[56] The theorists and the poets are complementary by virtue of responding to the same needs and discontents.[57]

   What present-day critics recognize as the self-mystified and self-contradictory characteristics of Romantic symbolist theory—its differentiation of symbol from allegory, its refusal to distinguish between image and meaning, its conflation of the relations of part and whole and of identity and difference, its denial of the possibility of interpreting the symbol—follow from particular burdens that the Romantic theorists inherited from the Enlightenment: confronted with the challenge of claiming the naturalness of a symbolism whose very existence was not intuitively obvious, they resorted, by the conceptual means examined in Chapter 3, to a reciprocally affirming metaphysics of participation and semiotics of identity. That is, the symbol was supposed to be identical to, by virtue of being part of, its referent, and vice versa. The corollary of this line of argument was that anything whatever was inherently capable of bearing meaning, and that any seemingly atomized individual was in fact an integral part of an harmoniously structured whole. 'In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering thro' the dewy window', confided Coleridge to his notebook in Malta in April 1805,

I seem rather to be seeking, as it were *asking*, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing any thing new. Even when that latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phænomenon were the dim Awaking of a forgotten or hidden Truth of my inner Nature/It is still interesting as a Word, a Symbol! It is Λογος, the Creator! <and the Evolver!>[58]

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[56] Wordsworth, Note to 'The Thorn' (1800), in *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797–1805*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 351; and cf. 'Essays upon Epitaphs' (1810), no. 3, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), ii. 80–96, at 84.

[57] Cf. Christoph Bode, 'Europe', in Nicholas Roe (ed.), *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 126–36, at 135: 'even the apparent contradictions and seeming incompatibilities within European Romanticism have common roots in that they form responses to the same set of cultural challenges'.

[58] Coleridge, *Notebooks*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge, 1957–2002), ii. 2546. The pointed brackets indicate a later insertion by Coleridge.

Since evidence of symbols so defined was predictably unforthcoming, some Romantics eventually sought it in classical antiquity (particularly Greek myth) and others in dreams, both of which had the advantage of being traditionally receptive to fanciful interpretations. (This is the subject of the last chapter.) But at that point the unanimity of purpose that had characterized early Romantic theorizing about the symbol ceased.

In general, the present study is concerned less with categorizing and differentiating the various manifestations of symbolist theory in the Romantic period (a task that has already been performed admirably by Sørensen) than with asking what lay beneath the phenomena under analysis. What cultural questions or needs motivated the formulation of symbolist theory, and what cultural conditions (philosophical, scientific, political) affected the forms that that theory assumed? If the concept of the symbol performed a kind of compensatory function, much as the celebration of the imagination by Romantic poets is supposed to have compensated for their disillusionment with the course of the French Revolution and the despair at the possibility of meaningful social reform, then to what extent was it successful?

To answer these questions, as noted earlier, I replace a synchronic archaeological mode of analysis with a diachronic genealogical mode. While an archaeology exposes complexities within the texts of a given discourse, a genealogy recovers the origin and development of the discourse itself and makes its social function comprehensible. By genealogy, therefore, I do not mean the specific origins of any one writer's reflections on the nature of the symbol. *Quellenforschung* has its uses, but its explanatory power is strictly limited by the fact that it always produces further material in need of explanation.

If, as I have here proposed, the concept of the symbol is to be understood as the attempted solution to a given problem, then it can scarcely be examined in isolation from that problem. Recognizing what preceded and conditioned the development of the concept is the prerequisite to understanding the concept itself. What made that concept attractive and what made it possible are the twin subjects of this study.

2

Burdens of Enlightenment

> The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.
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> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ch. 2

In the introduction to the *Encyclopédie,* Jean Le Rond d'Alembert claimed that the principles of the sciences and arts had been lost during the Middle Ages because the Scholastics had failed to call attention to the beauty and truth that *appear* to reveal themselves everywhere. Of course, it can only be to those who already know them that beauty and truth *semblent se montrer de toutes partes*. They must be pointed out before we can recognize that they have been standing before us all along. To free 'nature's truth' from the obfuscation of human dogma, which is how d'Alembert's co-editor defined the advancement of knowledge, would therefore be to restore it to its authentic state of self-evidentness, in the particular sense of being accessible to what Aristotelians called manifest experience and Enlightenment philosophers called sensible intuition.[1]

That truth may be hidden at all, and hence require assistance to be revealed, might have sufficed to refute the assumption that visibility

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[1] D'Alembert, 'Discours préliminaire', in Denis Diderot and d'Alembert (eds.), *L'Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et de métiers* (Paris and Neufchâtel, 1751–72), i, pp. i–xlv, at p. xx; Denis Diderot, 'Encyclopédie', in ibid., v. 635–48, at [636A]: 'Aujourd'hui que la Philosophie s'avance à grands pas; qu'elle soûmet à son empire tous les objets de son ressort; que son ton est le ton dominant, & qu'on commence à secouer le joug de l'autorité & de l'exemple pour s'en tenir aux lois de la raison, il n'y a presque pas un ouvrage élémentaire & dogmatique dont on soit entierement satisfait. On trouve ces productions calquées sur celles des hommes, & non sur la vérité de la nature.'

is one of its properties, let alone its most characteristic one. The seventeenth-century divine Joseph Glanvill, who credited Adam with extraordinary optical powers, thought that the manifest experience of nature's truth had been lost at the Fall.[2] But the association of knowing with seeing is so deeply ingrained in Western thought and so far from being 'merely' metaphorical—indeed it is encoded in classical Greek in the derivation of the very verb εἰδέναι [*eidenai*], *to know*, from the aorist form of the verb ὁρῆν [*horên*], *to see*—that it persisted even in, and beyond, the Enlightenment conception of epistemic visibility as an historically contingent condition. The Encyclopedists' reproach against the Middle Ages—which would become, *mutatis mutandis*, the reproach of the Romantics against the Enlightenment—presupposed that truth *should be* manifest.

Truth obscured artificially through the promulgation of dogma must be exposed artificially through the production of knowledge. Yet as knowledge is produced, it produces in turn its own discontent, which d'Alembert and Goethe identified from the complementary perspectives of the individual and the collective. We must cultivate multiple sciences, the Encyclopedist noted, because the universe is too vast and complex to be grasped from a single point of view. Even if humanity as a whole were able to comprehend nature's truth, Goethe pointed out to Schiller, the whole of humanity is never assembled in one place, and consequently 'nature has an easy job of hiding itself in front of our eyes'.[3] Precisely as the sum of human knowledge increases, its accessibility decreases, a dilemma that Diderot presented—in a scenario not unlike that of Borges's

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[2] Glanvill, *The Vanity of Dogmatizing: or, Confidence in Opinions Manifested in a Discourse of the Shortness and Uncertainty of Our Knowledge* (London, 1661), 5–6: '*Adam* needed no Spectacles. The acuteness of his natural Opticks (if conjecture may have credit) shew'd him much of the Cœlestial magnificence and bravery without a *Galilæo*'s tube. … What the experiences of many ages will scarce afford us at this distance from perfection, his quicker senses could teach in a moment. And whereas we patch up a piece of Philosophy from a few industriously gather'd, and yet scarce well observ'd or digested experiments, his knowledge was compleatly built, upon the certain, extemporary notice of his comprehensive, unerring faculties.' Glanvill repeated this supposition, omitting specific reference to Adam, in *Scepsis Scientifica: or, Confest Ignorance, the Way to Science* (London, 1665), 5–6.
[3] D'Alembert, 'Discours préliminaire', p. ix: 'L'Univers, pour qui sauroit l'embrasser d'un seul point de vûe, ne seroit, s'il est permis de le dire, qu'un fait unique & une grande vérité'; Goethe to Schiller, 25 Feb. 1798, *GA* xx. 539: 'die Natur ist deswegen

Library of Babel—as the convergence of the world of books with the world itself: 'As the centuries pass, the number of works grows without end, and one can foresee a time in which it will be almost as difficult to educate onself in a library as in the universe, and almost as fast to seek a truth in nature itself as to do so lost among an immense multitude of books.'[4] The fundamental premise and justification of the *Encyclopédie* was that this process, the logical (if unattainable) culmination of which would be virtual duplication of the world in the library, was already well advanced in the Enlightenment. Human knowledge had become, to use the metaphor favoured by d'Alembert and Diderot themselves, a *vaste labyrinthe* in need of a *mappemonde*.[5]

Abstracted from particular bodies of knowledge, the map offered by the *Encyclopédie*—a classification of arts and sciences, arranged hierarchically and presented diagrammatically in the form of a tree—was necessarily artificial and provisional, as the editors admitted freely: 'One can imagine as many systems of human knowledge as there are world maps of different projections, and each of these systems may have some particular advantage over the others.'[6] The relative modesty with which the Encyclopedists justified their own system (which they acknowledged to have been derived from Francis Bacon) followed from their recognition of two basic epistemological principles: first, that, the universe being infinitely large and complex, it could be surveyed and described from infinite points of view; and second, that, the number of such points of view being infinite, so too was the number of possible systems of knowledge. Within each system the constituent differentiae (e.g. *chirurgie, pharmacie*) and genera (e.g. *thérapeutique, médecine*) could have only a formal relation to one another, for their arrangement was always perspectively

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unergründlich, weil sie nicht Ein Mensch begreifen kann, obgleich die ganze Menschheit sie wohl begreifen könnte. Weil aber die liebe Menschheit niemals beisammen ist, so hat die Natur gut Spiel, sich vor unsern Augen zu verstecken.'

[4] Diderot, 'Encyclopédie', 644, 637; Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Library of Babel' (1941), in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 112–18.

[5] D'Alembert, 'Discours préliminaire', pp. xiv–xv; Diderot, 'Encyclopédie', 641–[641A]. This fear that the overall growth of knowledge, facilitated especially by the printing press, would contribute to its loss was an Enlightenment commonplace, as Richard Yeo demonstrates in *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ch. 3.

[6] D'Alembert, 'Discours préliminaire', p. xv.

contingent—that is, of local and regulative rather than universal and normative use. In representing without presuming to reproduce its object, the Encyclopedists' classification of knowledge resembled in method the early modern mechanical philosophy, which sought to explain the manifold of natural phenomena reductively by means of abstract models. Notwithstanding d'Alembert's insistence in the 'Discours préliminaire' and *Élémens de philosophie* (1759) that philosophy must restrict its concern to empirical facts, his encyclopedic scheme substituted the conceptual for the empirical, the constructed for the given.[7] And even that scheme, highly schematic as it was, is evident only vestigially, in the form of cross-references, in the alphabetically ordered articles of the *Encyclopédie* itself.

Only if we could view the universe from the same perspective as its creator, Diderot reflected in his encyclopedia article on encyclopedias, could we construct a system of knowledge from which all arbitrariness would be excluded.[8] In that system, the completeness and perfection of which would eliminate at once the need for and the possibility of other systems, cognition and intuition would be identical. But both Encyclopedists not only accepted but justified the inaccessibility of the divine perspective to humanity. D'Alembert's justification, in which the metaphors of the book and the labyrinth once again converged, was theocentric: 'One may compare the universe to certain sublimely obscure works whose authors, by sometimes lowering themselves to the level of the reader, try to persuade him that he understands nearly everything. Those of us who enter this labyrinth are fortunate, therefore, if we do not lose the true path; otherwise the light intended to guide us would serve only to lead us farther astray.'[9] That we

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[7] D'Alembert, p. ii; *Essai sur les élémens de philosophie*, §4, in *Œuvres philosophiques, historiques et littéraires*, ed. J. F. Bastien (Paris, 1805), ii. 27–40. Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, 2nd edn. (Berlin: Cassirer, 1911–22), ii. 408–15.

[8] Diderot, 'Encyclopédie', [640A]: 'L'univers soit réel soit intelligible a une infinité de points de vûe sous lesquels il peut être représenté, & le nombre des systèmes possibles de la connoissance humaine est aussi grand que celui de ces points de vûe. Le seul, d'où l'arbitraire seroit exclu, c'est comme nous l'avons dit dans notre *Prospectus*, le système qui existoit de toute éternité dans la volonté de Dieu.' Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *Die Genesis der kopernikanischen Welt* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), 61–5.

[9] D'Alembert, 'Discours préliminaire', p. vii. Though a mathematician, d'Alembert resisted appealing to mathematics to claim, as Galileo had allowed a character in the

are permitted to comprehend nature even in part is due to God's condescension towards us, and our benefit from his condescension is lost if we are misled into presuming we can comprehend nature fully.

Diderot, on the other hand, argued on anthropocentric grounds that the inaccessibility of the divine system of knowledge, the *grande livre* which would be equivalent to the intuition of the universe in its entirety, was not to be regretted. First, even if we were able to possess that system, we should be unable to profit from it because our minds would still be governed by 'the impatience and curiosity' that normally disrupt our observations and impede our understanding: 'Since the absolute perfection of a universal plan would not remedy the weakness of our understanding, let us stick to what is appropriate to our human condition and content ourselves with returning to some very general notion [of the universe].' Second, the infinite universe as viewed objectively from God's perspective would hold little subjective interest for us because our own place in it would be so obviously insignificant: 'if man, the thinking and observing being, is banished from the surface of the earth, this moving and sublime spectacle of nature is no more than a sad and silent scene. The universe falls mute; silence and night take hold of it. … It is the presence of man that makes the existence of beings interesting.'[10] In short, the only universe worth contemplating is that with humanity at its centre, even if it can only be a human creation.

Since the subjects of the *Encyclopédie*—that is, the sciences, arts, and trades—were too extensive and complex to be accessible in unmediated form to the individual, and in that respect no different from nature itself, they could not constitute an anthropocentric universe. But their instrument of mediation might do so. In a remarkable paragraph towards the end of his article on encyclopedias,

Dialogue on the Two Great World-Systems (1632) to do without fear of contradiction, that because the most rational of creators can only have created the world according to the most rational of principles—i.e. mathematical, the proofs of which we can comprehend in their necessity, 'beyond which there can be no greater certainty' (*la necessità, sopra la quale non par che possa esser sircurezza maggiore*)—our knowledge of nature must equal God's in 'objective certainty' (*credo che la cognizione [umana] agguagli la divina nella certezza obiettiva*), even if we know infinitely fewer mathematical principles than God does (*Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo*, giornata prima, in *Opere*, ed. Franz Brunetti, 3rd edn. (1996; Turin: UTET, 1999), ii. 135).

[10] Diderot, 'Encyclopédie', 641.

Diderot implied exactly this. The compensation for the impossibility of possessing a definitive understanding of either nature or the totality of human knowledge was the possibility of reading the *Encyclopédie* itself. Metaphorically, at least, the book was to replace nature, as the object of our perception, by *becoming* nature: 'A universal dictionary of the sciences and arts must be considered as an immense countryside [*une campagne immense*] covered with mountains, plains, rocks, waters, forests, animals, and everything else that makes for the variety of a great landscape [*la variété d'un grand paysage*].'[11]

   This imagined transposition of nature from nature itself to a book is analogous to the experience that Enlightenment aesthetics designated the sublime, in which, precisely by means of a subjective substitution of the phenomenal for the noumenal or the finite for the infinite, that which defied or overwhelmed perception was supposed to become perceivable: infinity manifested in the tiny portion of the heavens visible to the naked eye, or even in a succession of closely spaced columns. But as in the case of the sublime, to which I shall return, Diderot's description of the *Encyclopédie* as a landscape could not help betraying the desire that had motivated it, a longing to reconcile anthropocentrism with the idea of 'nature's truth' as perspectively neutral. The Enlightenment's incomplete satisfaction of such longing would condition, in ways this chapter will delineate, the Romantic theorization of the symbol.

However jocular Diderot may have been in characterizing the *Encyclopédie* as a landscape, the conception of landscape implied in his remark exemplifies a distinctly modern relation to nature, one that found expression in the sixteenth century in the emergence of landscape as an autonomous subject of painting, and in the eighteenth century in topographical poetry and the philosophical elaboration of

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[11] Diderot, [647A]. The notion that a book could function as a proxy for nature was to find a more precise and literally meant formulation when Alexander von Humboldt confided to Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, in a letter of 24 Oct. 1834, the intended effect of his vast survey of natural history, *Kosmos*: 'A book about nature must create the same impression as nature itself' (*Briefe von Alexander von Humboldt an Varnhagen von Ense aus den Jahren 1827 bis 1858*, ed. Ludmilla Assing, 2nd edn. (Leipzig, 1860), 23; quoted by Hans Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* (1981; Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), 283.)

such phenomena as the picturesque and the sublime. Just when the appeal to manifest experience was rejected in the mechanical natural philosophy, it was affirmed in the idea of landscape, that is, of nature exclusively as it appears to the human observer, or, in Kant's blunter language, 'just as one sees it'.[12] According to the influential thesis of the philosopher Joachim Ritter, this aestheticization of nature was a response to the disenchantment of the world and the fragmentation of society at the hands of the forces of modernity, including rationalist and technological natural science.

Deriving from and succeeding the classical and medieval tradition of θεορία τοῦ κώσμου [*theoria tou kôsmou*], the philosophical contemplation of a cosmos assumed to be wholly accessible to human sight, the modern experience of landscape reconstituted an anthropocentric universe subjectively through the aesthetic representation of a particular 'piece of nature' in which the presence of its entirety was implied: 'landscape is fundamentally the appearance of the whole of nature, which in itself is lost [*das Scheinen der an sich verlorenen ganzen Natur*]'.[13] If the prototype of the experience of landscape, and more particularly of the sublime, was the detached and reflective

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[12] Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* (2nd edn., 1791), §29 (general note), in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1900–), v. 270. In the remainder of this chapter the third *Critique* will be cited parenthetically by section number of the text and page number of the Akademie-Ausgabe. The translation by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), quoted here (with occasional modifications) unless otherwise indicated, includes in its margins the pagination of the Akademie-Ausgabe.

[13] Ritter, 'Landschaft: Zur Funktion des Ästhetischen in der modernen Gesellschaft', in *Subjektivität: Sechs Aufsätze* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), 141–63, at 151 and n. 37 and 151 n. 57. Ritter's thesis, which was partly indebted to the sociologist Georg Simmel's 'Philosophie der Landschaft' (1913), has found broad if not unqualified acceptance in the German-speaking world among students of landscape painting and eighteenth-century literature: see e.g. Rolf Wedewer, *Landschaftsmalerei zwischen Traum und Wirklichkeit: Idylle und Konflikt* (Cologne: DuMont, 1978); Matthias Eberle, *Individuum und Landschaft: Zur Enstehung und Entwicklung der Landschaftsmalerei* (Giessen: Anabas, 1980); Oskar Bätschmann, *Entfernung der Natur: Landschaftsmalerei 1750–1920* (Cologne: DuMont, 1989); and Hans Robert Jauss, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1982). For Simmel's essay, see his *Brücke und Tür: Essays des Philosophen zur Geschichte, Religion, Kunst und Gesellschaft*, ed. Michael Landmann (Stuttgart: Koehler, 1957), 141–52 (cited by Ritter, 'Landschaft', 151 n. 37). In 'The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of Landscape' (1950), reprinted in his *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1966), 107–21, E. H. Gombrich too emphasized the

spectatorship epitomized in Lucretius' comparison of the philosopher to someone watching a shipwreck from the safety of the shore, then the closest analogue to the creation of landscape was its own negative stimulus, the explanatory procedure of early modern science.[14] This claim requires explanation, however, in light of the fact that mechanistic science was concerned with the causes of phenomena and subjectivist aesthetics with their effects.

Both the self-designated mechanical philosophy and the Christianized Aristotelian natural philosophy it sought to displace were constructivist, insofar as both produced abstract models of the universe. The crucial difference between them consisted in the kinds of models they produced, in accordance with their respective attitudes towards manifest experience. Assuming visibility to be the condition of intelligibility, the Scholastics had sought to account theoretically for appearances as such, that is, to 'save the phenomena'. But the mechanists, dissatisfied with the Scholastic practice of explaining phenomena tautologically in terms of 'substantial forms' inferred from their sensible properties (e.g. hotness in a hot object), rejected the ontology underlying such explanation, with its implicit trust in the cognitive sufficiency of manifest experience. Of the two ideas he had of the sun, Descartes wrote in the *Meditations on First Philosophy*, one derived from the senses and the other formed through astronomical reasoning, reason persuaded him that the former, which seemed to emanate most directly from the sun itself (*quàm proxime ab ipso videtur emanasse*), in fact resembled it least (*ei maxime esse dissimilem*). Bacon in the *Novum Organon* and Galileo's spokesman Salviati in the *Dialogue on the Two Great World-Systems* warned similarly of the unreliability of sensible intuition.[15] In contrast to Scholastic models

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artificiality of the experience of landscape, though without theorizing its relation to the conditions of early modernity.

[14] Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, 2. 1–4. Although Ritter himself did not cite the Lucretian representation of *theoria*, the revisers of Richard Newald's history of eighteenth-century German literature do note its relevance to the sublime: see Sven Aage Jørgensen, Klaus Bohnen, and Per Øhrgaard, *Aufklärung, Sturm und Drang, frühe Klassik, 1740–1789*, vol. vi of the *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 1990), 117.

[15] Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (1641), 3. 39–40, in *Œuvres*, ed. Charles Adam and Pierre Tannéry, 2nd edn. (Paris: CNRS/Vrin, 1964–76), vii. 39; Bacon, *Novum Organon* (1620), B4ᵛ–B5, in *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, ed. Graham

of the universe, therefore, the mechanistic ones reduced phenomena to a handful of real properties, whether visible or not, and reconstructed the universe hypothetically from those properties according to uniform and mathematically specifiable principles.

Under these conditions, the contents of manifest experience could hardly be restored to the state of unquestioned givenness they had enjoyed in the tradition of *theoria*. But precisely their dissociation from objectivity made them available to subjectivity. If manifest experience was devalued scientifically by means of one kind of imaginative construction, the mechanical modelling of nature, then it could be revalued aesthetically by another, the creation of landscapes. Although it may have developed in reaction against the mathematical and mechanistic explanation of nature, the aestheticization of nature as landscape—like Hobbes's political theory, which offered a materialistic explanation of human social organization—accepted the artificiality of the seemingly natural, of the empirically given, and extended the constructivist procedure of the mechanical natural philosophy into the realm of human experience. For Ritter, the experience of landscape depended not only on the acceptance of sensible intuition but on the rejection of an instrumentalist understanding of nature. But as Christian Begemann objects, the freedom to enjoy nature 'without a practical aim' was itself a consequence of the scientific renunciation of sensible intuition. That is, the demand for renewed contact with the natural world lost through 'civilization's denaturalizing process' (*zivilisierte Denaturierung*) could be satisfied only 'on the basis of the very process of separation from nature: on the one hand modern natural science itself, which is equally a reason for and symptom of the split, contributes to awakening a novel interest in natural phenomena … and on the other hand, more significantly

Rees (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996–), xi. 32, 34; Galileo, *Dialogo*, giornata prima, *Opere*, ii. 51–4, 79–80. On the method and ontology of the mechanical philosophy, see Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 317–27; Steven Nadler, 'Doctrines of Explanation in Late Scholasticism and in the Mechanical Philosophy', in Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), i. 513–52; and Paolo Rossi, *The Birth of Modern Science*, trans. Cynthia De Nardi Ipsen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), ch. 9.

in the present context, the split from nature makes possible what is indispensable for its enjoyment—mastery over it'.[16]

Now by insisting simultaneously on the culturally preservative function of the idea of landscape (preservative, that is, of the philosophical tradition's assumptions about the relation of nature to humanity) and on the historically unprecedented conditions of that same idea's development (unprecedented, that is, by virtue of their modernity, understood as the radical rejection of tradition), Ritter could imply what he was willing to state openly only elsewhere, that modern society 'needs an organ [*Organ*] to compensate for its lack of history [*ihre Geschichtslosigkeit kompensiert*] and to keep open and present the human historical and spiritual world that society must exclude from itself'.[17] Since he believed that such compensation continued to be demanded of subjectivity in the present, and indeed constituted its 'greatness and world-historical office', he had little incentive to address the issue directly in an essay whose historical focus would have raised the potentially awkward question of whether the aestheticization of nature was in fact adequate to the task of compensating for the objectification of nature by modern science and technology. Yet the fact that Romantic symbolist theory sought to posit an ordered and meaningful universe precisely by reconciling aesthetics with natural philosophy, hence reversing the process from which the idea of landscape is supposed to have emerged, suggests at the least a dissatisfaction with the preceding century of subjectivist aesthetics. Thus even if subjectivity did assume in the early modern

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[16] Ritter, 'Landshaft', 150–1; Begemann, *Furcht und Angst im Prozeß der Aufklärung: Zu Literatur und Bewußtseinsgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt a.M.: Athenäum, 1987), 110–11. On Hobbes's use of mechanical science as a paradigm for his social theory, see Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, 327–31.

[17] Ritter, 'Die Aufgabe der Geisteswissenschaften in der modernen Gesellschaft', in *Subjektivität*, 105–40, at 131. Even here, Ritter footnoted the word *kompensiert* with a reference to his student Odo Marquard, as if to disclaim full responsibility for it. To be sure, however, neither Ritter's admirers (like Marquard) nor his critics (like Jürgen Habermas) have been deceived about the place of the essay on landscape in his general theory of the compensatory role of subjectivity in and for modernity: see Marquard, *In Defence of the Accidental: Philosophical Studies*, trans. Robert Wallace (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 23, 92–9; and Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 71–4. The phrase quoted in the following sentence is from Ritter's 'Subjektivität und industrielle Gesellschaft' in *Subjektivität*, 11–35, at 33.

age and Enlightenment the cultural function that Ritter attributed to it, its performance of that function cannot have been definitive.

Perhaps nowhere are both the demand for and the limitation of aesthetic compensation revealed more clearly than in the reception of the concept of infinite space, even though that concept's provenance was theological rather than scientific. As early as the fourteenth century the *possibility* of an infinite extracosmic void had been admitted, for example by Jean Buridan and Nicole Oresme, in accordance with the Condemnation of 1277, which prohibited theories that contradicted the doctrine of divine omnipotence.[18] Ignoring as it does this medieval speculation about infinite space, which because of its conflicts with the then-dominant Aristotelian physics could have developed only as a consequence of specifically theological pressures, Marjorie Hope Nicolson's well-known account of the great secularizing march of infinity out of God and into space is therefore highly misleading.[19] But in one respect her account is correct: an *aesthetics* of the infinite did not begin to develop before the end of the seventeenth century.

To the Scholastics such an aesthetics would have been incomprehensible, for one of their principal objections against the actual infiniteness of space was its empirical inaccessibility: 'an infinite

[18] On the Scholastic 'infinitists' see Anneliese Maier, *Die Vorläufer Galileis im 14. Jahrhundert* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 1949), 196–215; Edward Grant, *Much Ado about Nothing: Theories of Space and Vacuum from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 103–81, and *Planets, Stars, and Orbs: The Medieval Cosmos, 1200–1687* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 169–85. From 1277, when the bishop of Paris condemned 219 Aristotelian propositions that conflicted with the doctrine of divine omnipotence (*potentia Dei absoluta*), including the proposition that God could not move the universe rectilinearly because a vacuum would be left behind, the Scholastics had faced the difficulty of reconciling at least the possible existence of an infinite extracosmic void with the finite Aristotelian cosmos, the reality of which their physical theories presupposed. Typical solutions including denying this void extension, dimension, or actuality. Thus Oresme distinguished non-dimensional extracosmic space, which he ventured to call *le inmensité de Dieu et … Dieu meisme*, from dimensional intracosmic space: 'Et doncques hors le ciel est une espace wide incorporelle d'autre maniere que n'est quelconque espace pleine et corporelle' (*Le Livre du ciel et du monde*, 1. 24, ed. A. D. Menut and A. J. Denomy, 2nd edn. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 176).

[19] See Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1959).

space existing supernaturally beyond the heavens or existing outside this world ought not to be assumed', Buridan taught, 'because we ought not to posit things that are not apparent to us by sense [*quae non apparent nobis per sensum*], or experience, or natural reason, or by the authority of sacred scripture.'[20] To the early modern philosophers who affirmed the infinite extension of the universe on theological grounds—the most prominent being the Dalmatian Platonist Francesco Patrizzi, the lapsed Neopolitan Dominican Giordano Bruno, and the Cambridge Platonist Henry More—such an aesthetics was unnecessary, for they recognized no particular challenge to human self-understanding in spatial infinitude. Indeed More, adducing reason's independence of the senses as evidence of the soul's immortality, celebrated precisely the rejection of manifest experience in the postulates of infinite space and infinite worlds:

> Wherefore who'll judge the limits of the world
> By what appears unto our failing sight
> Appeals to sense, reason down headlong hurld
> Out of her throne by giddie vulgar might.
> But here base senses dictates they will dight
> With specious title of Philosophie,
> And stiffly will contend their cause is right
> From rotten rolls of school antiquity,
> Who constantly denie corporall Infinitie.[21]

Even the mathematician Thomas Digges, who appealed to the infiniteness of space to explain the absence of any observable stellar parallax, such as would have been expected if the earth moved, seems to have had a primarily theological motive for his adjustment to the Copernican system, which may be why he failed to notice the contradiction between his claims that the 'huge frame of goddes woorke [is] proponed to our senses' and that 'the greatest part' of the heavenly

[20] Buridan, *Quaestiones super libris quattuor de caelo et mundo* (*c*.1340), bk. 1, qu. 17, ed. E. A. Moody (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1942), 79; translation quoted from Grant, *Planets, Stars*, 170.

[21] More, *Democritus Platonissans, or An Essay upon the Infinity of Worlds out of Platonick Principles* (1646), st. 9, in *A Platonick Song of the Soul*, ed. Alexander Jacob (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1998), 407–8. On Patrizzi see Grant, *Much Ado*, 199–206; on Bruno see below, Ch. 4 at nn. 45–9.

bodies 'rest by reason of their wonderfull distance inuisible vnto vs'.[22]

By disclosing the existence of previously unseen phenomena, the telescope and the microscope confirmed that nature was not 'proponed' to the naked human eye; but by remedying the same organic weakness they exposed, they also offered a compensation, or at least the promise of a compensation, for it. Moreover, while the need for an artificially assisted optical capability could be attributed to the Fall, as it was by Joseph Glanvill, the development of instruments to supply that need was unambiguously the accomplishment not merely of fallen but of modern man. Extolling the telescope and microscope (along with the thermometer, barometer, and air-pump) in *Plus Ultra* (1668), a polemical defence of the 'new science' sponsored by the Royal Society, Glanvill still assumed the authority of the senses as the final adjudicator of scientific questions.

But no instrument could ever make the infinite visible in its entirety, for the infinite has no entirety. Thus to postulate the *actual* infiniteness of space was not only to deny humanity the centrality it had enjoyed in a closed cosmos, and indeed any absolutely determinable position in the universe, but to renounce definitively the assumption of the commensurateness of the senses, even artificially enhanced, with nature. When Pascal, after his 'conversion' on the night of 23 November 1654, began to reflect on the implications of infinity for human self-understanding, he abandoned his earlier

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[22] Digges, *A Perfit Description of the Celestiall Orbes*, in Leonard Digges, *A Prognostication Euerlastinge of Righte Goode Effect* (London, 1576), M1–O3, at N3ᵛ–N4. Like (though earlier than) Bruno, Digges thought it only fitting that an infinite God should create an infinite universe. His treatise, a translation of three chapters of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* with his own interpolations, went through seven editions by 1605 and is reprinted with commentary by F. R. Johnson and S. V. Larkey in 'Thomas Digges, the Copernican System, and the Idea of the Infinity of the Universe in 1576', *Huntington Library Bulletin*, 5 (1934), 69–117. (Stellar parallaxes were not measured successfully till 1838.) Copernicus himself had remained agnostic on the question of the universe's extent, as would Galileo and Descartes, while Johannes Kepler emphatically rejected the possibility of its infiniteness: 'The very idea holds I don't know what secret horrors when one finds oneself wandering in this immensity whose limits, centre, and hence fixed place are denied [*hoc immenso; cujus termini, cujus medium, ideoque et certa loca, negantur*]' (*De stella nova in pede Serpentarii* (1606), ch. 21, in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Walther von Dyck and Max Caspar (Munich: Beck, 1937–2002), i. 253).

confidence that human reason, over time and by its own effort—of which he considered the telescope to be exemplary—could reduce its disproportion to the objects of its investigations. Now he understood that our placement between the infinitely large and infinitely small prevented us from fathoming either: 'For what, finally, is a man in nature? A nothing in comparison with the infinite, an all in comparison with the nothing, a mean between nothing and all, infinitely far from comprehending the extremes. … Since he is equally incapable of seeing the nothing from which he was made and the infinite by which he is engulfed, what can he do but discern some appearance of the mean of things, forever despairing of knowing either their beginning or their end?'[23] What the telescope and microscope truly revealed, therefore, was the extent not of nature itself but of human presumption, 'a presumption as infinite as its object'. Aspiring vainly to a knowledge reserved for the Creator only deflected us from pursuing the knowledge within our grasp, the knowledge of ourselves: 'Let man awaken and consider his nature in relation to the nature of things; let him see himself as lost in this remote region of nature; and let him, from this small cell in which he finds himself living—I mean the universe—value earth, kingdoms, cities, and himself at their true worth. What is a man in the infinite?'

   That question became only more pressing in the succeeding decades, especially as the infiniteness of extended, dimensional space was presupposed in Newtonian mechanics, for the first time on solely scientific grounds, as a basis of the principle of rectilinear inertial motion, according to which an object moving uniformly forward will continue forever unless acted on by an opposing force.

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[23] Pascal, *Pensées*, fr. 185 (= 199 Lafuma), in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Michel Le Guern (Paris: Gallimard, 1998–2000), ii. 608–14: 'Car enfin qu'est-ce que un homme dans la nature? Un néant à l'égard de l'infini, un tout à l'égard du néant, un milieu entre rien et tout, infiniment éloigné de comprendre les extrêmes … . également incapable de voir le néant d'où il est tiré et l'infini où il est engloutit, que fera-t-il donc, sinon d'appercevoir quelque apparence du milieu des choses dans un désespoir éternel de connaître ni leur principe ni leur fin?' In the 'Préface sur le traité du vide', composed *c*.1651, Pascal had remarked that the telescope enabled us to recognize the true cause of the apparent whiteness of the Milky Way: *une infinité de petites étoiles* (ibid. i. 452–8, at 457). (Fontenelle would use the same phrase in the same context in the 'fifth evening' of his *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, but with a significant addition: *invisibles aux yeux à cause de leur pétitesse.*)

One of the earliest acknowledgements of the psychological disquiet produced by the seventeenth century's astronomical discoveries and theories appeared—after Pascal's *Pensées* (1670) but still before Newton's *Principia mathematica* (1687)—in Bernard de Fontenelle's exceptionally popular and widely translated *Dialogue on the Plurality of Worlds* of 1686, written as a series of conversations between an enlightened astronomer and an inquisitive marquise. What the marquise learns on the fifth evening about the fixed stars—that they are infinite in number, each at the centre of its own vortex (*tourbillon*)—disturbs her, for she realizes that the earth's position in such a universe must be purely contingent and therefore insignificant: 'But here is a universe so vast that I lose myself in it; I no longer know where I am; I no longer am anything. … Is all this immense space that contains our sun and planets no more than a small parcel of the universe? Are there as many similar spaces as there are fixed stars? That confounds me, troubles me, terrifies me.'[24]

The marquise's terror, like Pascal's, attests to what Georg Simmel identified as the central paradox of modern science: namely that the infinite distances between ourselves and stellar objects first present themselves to consciousness just when they are mastered theoretically.[25] We may situate nearer the end of the seventeenth century, therefore, the phenomenon that Michel Foucault situated a century later: 'the fear of darkened spaces, of the pall of gloom which prevents the full visibility of things, men, and truths'.[26] Of course the spaces to which Foucault was referring were those from which arbitrary political acts were decreed and in which conspiracies were hatched, but he explicitly linked the politicization with the infinitization of space, misdating the latter, at least, by a century: 'At the moment when a considered politics of spaces was starting to develop, at the end of the eighteenth century, the new achievements in theoretical

[24] Fontenelle, *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Alain Niderst (Paris: Fayard, 1989–2001), ii. 98. The work was translated into English by Aphra Behn and Joseph Glanvill (both in 1688), among others, and into German by Johann Christian Gottsched (1726) and Johann Elert Bode (1780).

[25] Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 1990), 475–6.

[26] Foucault, 'The Eye of Power', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), 146–65, at 153 and 149.

and experimental physics dislodged philosophy from its ancient right to speak of the world, the cosmos, finite or infinite space.' If the infiniteness of space had not been accepted as a possible explanation of the absence of stellar parallaxes or, later, as a condition of rectilinear inertial motion, then humanity's insignificance and impotence in the universe need hardly have become the objects of serious reflection. It is not that these distances were perceived as actual threats to human existence, but that they could not be reconciled with any cosmic schema in which humanity was assigned a unique and therefore inherently significant position: 'the more the distance in the external world is conquered', Simmel observed, 'the more it increases the distance in the spiritual world.' This dilemma presented itself under two aspects, one concerning the human species and the other concerning the individual subject.

In Fontenelle's dialogue the astronomer remains unaware that his belief in an infinity of inhabited worlds preserves, albeit in a different form, the anthropocentrism from which he thinks his rejection of geocentrism has liberated him. With astonishing assurance he informs the marquise that humans, varied as they are, together represent microcosmically the inhabitants of the other worlds: 'it is convenient enough to be on earth, for here we see all the other worlds in epitome [*en abrégé*].'[27] Since Fontenelle's spokesman for the Enlightenment assumes that extraterrestrials are, if not necessarily human, nonetheless rational like humans, his contraction of extraterrestrial life into human life is equivalent to an expansion of human life throughout the cosmos. The conclusion that human dominion was figuratively universal followed naturally from this assumption, fundamental not only to Fontenelle but equally to the astronomer Christian Huygens, whose *Kosmotheoros* (1698) was nearly as popular as the *Entretiens*, that human rationality was literally universal.[28] But as far as the individual human was concerned, the amount of comfort that could be

[27] Fontenelle, *Entretiens*, quatrième soir, *Œuvres complètes*, ii. 95.
[28] See Karl Guthke, *The Last Frontier: Imagining Other Worlds from the Copernican Revolution to Modern Science Fiction*, trans. Helen Atkins (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 226–44, esp. 239–44. Guthke's compendious study also takes account of the numerous theological questions prompted by Enlightenment speculation on a plurality of inhabited worlds, the most significant of those questions having been whether the Incarnation was indeed a unique event (in which case the

derived on this world from imagining the presence of rationality on other worlds was strictly limited, as Fontenelle's marquise intimates: 'For my part, I begin to see the earth as so dreadfully small that I believe from now on I'll have no interest in anything [*je ne crois pas avoir désormais d'empressement pour aucune chose*].' Joseph Addison voiced a similar thought in his *Spectator* paper of 9 July 1714: 'I could not but look upon my self with secret Horror, as a Being, that was not worth the smallest Regard of one who had so great a Work under his Care and Superintendency. I was afraid of being overlooked amidst the Immensity of Nature, and lost among that infinite Variety of Creatures, which in all probability swarm through all these immeasurable Regions of Matter.'[29] Hence the need for another way of mastering the infinite psychologically.

In response to Pascal's famous expression of terror at the eternal silence of infinite space, Paul Valéry offered a 'counterproof' opposing comforting sensation to fearful silence, subjective experience to objective conceptualization: 'The intermittent uproar of the little corners we inhabit reassures us.'[30] Now once the sublime encompassed not only rhetorical effects but the experience of nature, as it did within a few decades of Boileau's popularization of Longinus in the 1670s, it could serve the emergent discipline of aesthetics in legitimizing the subjective universe of human perception and imagination as an object of knowledge distinct from the objective universe of mathematical relations and physical laws. Assessed solely according to their ability to arouse the feelings characteristic of the sublime, natural objects as intrinsically heterogeneous as the silent heavens and the stormy seas could be identified with each other as members of a single class of emotional stimuli. What was *perceived* as infinite needed to have no relation to what was *conceived* as infinite, exactly

inhabitants of other worlds had to be deemed unfallen) or whether (as Thomas Paine mischievously insinuated) Christ was a space traveller. See also below, Ch. 4 at n. 50.

[29] *Spectator*, no. 565, ed. D. F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), iv. 529–33, at 530 (quoted by Guthke, *The Last Frontier*, 213).

[30] Pascal, *Pensées*, fr. 187 (= 201 Lafuma), in *Œuvres complètes*, ii. 615: 'Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie'; Valéry, *Autres rhumbs* (1927), in *Œuvres*, ed. Jean Hytier (Paris: Gallimard, 1957–60), ii. 651–99, at 696: 'Contre-épreuve, *négatif*, d'une phrase illustre: *Le vacarme intermittent des petits coins où nous vivons nous rassure*.'

because the latter, qua infinite, could not be an object of perception. The perceived infinite, which might more accurately be termed the seemingly limitless, therefore belonged to nature not as it was understood in the natural sciences but as it was understood aesthetically, that is, as landscape. To the extent that Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon project, to which Foucault ascribed exemplary status, represented the Enlightenment's determination to master the invisible by rendering it visible, it was merely the counterpart in penology to the concept of the sublime in aesthetics.

In Thomas Burnet's *Theory of the Earth*, the first two books of which were published in Latin in 1681 and in English three years later, we find perhaps the earliest consideration of the subjectivized infinite. Although Burnet was not concerned with aesthetics per se and did not articulate a concept of the sublime, he anticipated the eighteenth-century theorists of the sublime in presupposing the possibility of taking pleasure in the representation of such disturbing or perplexing things. What the subject enjoys in these situations, as Hans Robert Jauss has explained, is 'not the objects themselves in their shocking negativity, but the pure functioning of its own faculties as they are excited by such objects. … The observer can avoid being disconcerted if only he succeeds in reflectively enjoying the functioning of his own excited faculties [*die Funktion der eigenen affizierten Vermögen*].'[31] In the response to the infinite, this distancing of the subject from the initial stimulus occurs by means of a phenomenon that is designated infinite and thus substitutes for the genuinely infinite. Vast phenomena—oceans, mountains, even the visible sky—become these substitutes:

The greatest objects of Nature are, methinks, the most pleasing to behold; and next to the great Concave of the Heavens, and those boundless Regions where the Stars inhabit, there is nothing that I look upon with more pleasure than the wide Sea and the Mountains of the Earth. There is something August and stately in the Air of these things that inspires the mind with great thoughts and passions; We do naturally upon such occasions think of God and his greatness, and whatsoever hath but the shadow and appearance of INFINITE, as all things have that are too big for our comprehension, they

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[31] Jauss, *Ästhetische Erfahrung*, 85–6.

fill and over-bear the mind with their Excess, and cast it into a pleasing kind of stupor and admiration.[32]

   In Germany the theme was taken up early in the eighteenth century by Barthold Heinrich Brockes, who produced a sensuous survey of creation in a cycle of poems called *Earthly Delight in God*, each poem of which ends with a formulaic encomium to the Creator. In one of those poems, 'The Heavenly Scripture', Brockes celebrated the infinite heavens precisely for their visibility to us as a whole. Here are the relevant lines:

> Da ich anitzt die allertiefste Höhe,
> Den unbegränzten Raum des hohlen Himmels, sehe
> .   .   .   .
> Wo Sein unendlich ewig Kleid,
> Gewebt aus Licht und Dunkelheit,
> Sein Wesen zeiget und verhüllet;
> So stellet dieser Raum recht sichtbar, hell und klar
> Nicht unserm Geiste nur, den Augen selber, dar
> Selbst die Unendlichkeit
> .   .   .   .
> Ein Platz in dessen weitem Schooß
> Viel Millionen Sonnen wohnen,
> Kann, nebst verschied'nen Erden,
> Auf einmal übersehen werden,
> Auf einmal in die spiegelnden Krystallen
> Von unsern kleinen Augen fallen.[33]
>
> (As I now see the deepest height,
> The unbounded space of empty heaven
> .   .   .   .
> Where His infinite eternal cloak,
> Woven of light and darkness,
> Displays and veils his being,
> So may this space present, visible, bright, and clear,

[32] Burnet, *The Theory of the Earth: Containing an Account of the Original of the Earth, and of All the General Changes which It Hath Already Undergone, or Is to Undergo, Till the Consummation of All Things* (London, 1684–90), i. 139–40.
   [33] Brockes, 'Die himmlische Schrift', ll. 18–19, 21–6, 43–8, in *Auszug der vornehmsten Gedichte, aus dem … Irdischen Vergnügen in Gott* (Hamburg, 1763), 115–16.

> Not only to our mind but even to our eyes
> Infinity itself
>   .   .   .   .
> A place, in whose wide lap
> Many millions of suns reside,
> Which can, alongside different worlds,
> Be surveyed at once,
> And at all once fall on the reflecting lenses
> Of our little eyes.)

By the middle of the eighteenth century, when Edmund Burke published his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, the subjective infinite of aesthetics had become sufficiently detached from any concept of infinity in the natural sciences that the quality of infiniteness was no longer attributed exclusively to natural objects: 'There are scarce any things which can become the objects of our senses that are really, and in their own nature infinite. But the eye not being able to perceive the bounds of many things, they seem to be infinite, and they produce the same effects as if they were really so', those effects consisting in a 'delightful horror'.[34] Burke's notion of what he christened the 'artificial infinite' encompassed both natural phenomena, such as the numberless profusion of stars in the heavens, and architectural effects involving succession and uniformity, as in rotundas and colonnades. The infinite in the Burkean sublime was therefore artificial not only in the sense of being an optical illusion, but also in the sense of being producible by human effort.

With this notion of the artificial infinite, according to which the subject perceives the very quality that is offensive to human consciousness because it cannot in itself be perceived, the subjectivization of

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[34] Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. J. T. Boulton, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 73. For a brief survey of the theorization of the sublime from Boileau to Hegel, with an implicitly Foucauldian identification of the aesthetic experience with anxiety about the unchecked exercise of political power, see Jonathan Lamb, 'The Sublime', in H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (eds.), *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. iv of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 394–416, esp. 394–411. On the sublime of nature in particular, see Christian Begemann, 'Erhabene Nature: Zur Übertragung des Begriffs des Erhabenen auf Gegenstände der äußeren Natur in den deutschen Kunsttheorien des 18. Jahrhunderts', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 58 (1984), 74–110.

the infinite reached its *reductio ad absurdam*. In marrying the infinite to the sublime, Enlightenment aesthetics sought to see what could not be seen in order to compensate for not being able to see it. In that respect the notion of the artificial infinite betrays how deeply the scientific renunciation of sensible intuition was felt to be a loss, and represents the limit to which primacy of manifest experience in the subject's relation to the outside world could be restored by occluding the rupture between experience and reason. That the infinite resisted complete domestication by subjectivization is evident from the emotional response that was considered distinctive to the sublime: pain or horror mitigated by delight, as opposed to an unqualified delight. If the delight resulted from the artificiality of the representation itself, the horror resulted from a lingering awareness of the reality behind the representation, a reality overwhelming in its immensity. Even that vestigial indignity to humanity was intolerable to Kant, however, for his moral theory was founded on the premise of human autonomy, defined as the ability of the rational will to act independently of any considerations arising from sensation. Thus in the third *Critique* he asserted categorically that 'nothing that can be the object of the senses is … to be called sublime' (§25/p. 250). This dissociation of sublimity from the sensible world meant that, although he could (and did) accept Burke's description of the affect of the sublime, Kant had to explain that affect solely by reference to the human mind. As Wordsworth declared in his strangely Kantian fragment on the sublime and beautiful, 'The true province of the philosopher is not to grope about in the external world … but to look into his own mind and determine the law by which he is affected'.[35]

One casualty of Kant's rejection of a purely psychological account of the sublime in favour of a cognitive and moral account was the notion of the artificial infinite. He not only denied the possibility of an aesthetic representation of the infinite as a whole, that is, as landscape, but interpreted its impossibility as the basis of the humanity's

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[35] '[The Sublime and the Beautiful]', in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), ii. 349–60, at 357. On this essay see Raimonda Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 128–34. Coleridge could not have had a direct influence on the essay's content if it was, as its editors surmise, composed in 1811, during the two-year rupture in his friendship with Wordsworth.

recovery of its dignity in relation to nature. While the discovery that we cannot comprehend the infinite aesthetically is painful, the recognition that we can nonetheless conceive it without contradiction is pleasurable, for precisely this ability 'to think of it *as a whole* indicates a faculty of mind which surpasses every standard of sense', namely reason (§26/p. 254). The moral significance of the sublime therefore consists in the fact that the experience 'makes intuitable, as it were, the superiority of the rational vocation of our cognitive faculty over the greatest faculty of sensibility [*die Überlegenheit der Vernunftbestimmung unserer Erkenntnisvermögen über das größte Vermögen der Sinnlichkeit gleichsam anschaulich macht*]' (§27/p. 257), and hence represents our independence from nature. That is why sublimity must be attributed not to the external object—and Kant assumes it is usually a natural object—that furnishes the occasion for the experience of the sublime, but rather to the mind itself, 'insofar as we can become conscious of being superior to nature within us and thus also to nature outside us' (§28/p. 264). Reversing the direction of the aestheticization of infinity in the first half of the century, then, Kant encouraged the subject to establish its nobility less by means of than at the expense of external phenomena. Infinity at one entrance being quite shut out, the Kantian sublime shines inward, planting eyes within the human mind so that we may see and tell of things invisible to mortal sight.

Kant thus arrived at the same conclusion that Henry More, in his own reflections on infinity, had reached a century and a half earlier, deducing humanity's independence of nature from reason's independence of the senses. But since it is possible to conceive the infinite without reference to an object of the senses, one may reasonably ask why he troubled at all to square his vindication of the rational will with a critique of aesthetic judgement. Or to rephrase the question, why did he consider the pleasure he identified with the sublime to be 'possible only by means of a displeasure' (§27/p. 260)? The answer surely lies in his paradoxical assumption, unstated but clearly insinuated in the third *Critique*, that the mind needs, or at least wants, a sensuous confirmation of its supersensuous vocation. Paul Guyer speculates that Kant omitted artworks almost completely from his discussion of the sublime in part because his analysis of the experience was predicated on the radical opposition of nature and

human practical reason.[36] And indeed, in ascribing sublimity strictly to the mind, Kant differentiated the spheres of reason and nature more rigorously than had his Enlightenment predecessors. Yet the 'analytic of the sublime', and to an even greater extent the sections of the third *Critique* concerned with 'aesthetic ideas', nevertheless bear witness to Kant's disquiet with the fundamental dualisms of his critical project: dualisms of subject and object, reason and sensation, noumenon and phenomenon, ideal and real, mind and nature.

In aesthetics Kant sought a link between knowledge and metaphysics, realms which the first two *Critiques* had shown to be fundamentally incommensurable, the postulates of pure practical reason—namely, of the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God—being insusceptible of empirical confirmation. If aesthetic judgement, despite being neither theoretical nor practical, 'nonetheless makes possible a transition from the manner of thinking in the one [knowledge] … to that of the other [morality]' (p. 176) so that the laws of morality will become real in the sensible world and the laws of nature reconcilable to the laws of morality, then the starry heavens above us and the moral law within us will be at one, so to speak, and humanity's place in the world coherently explained. Thus in the introduction to the third *Critique* Kant no sooner reaffirmed the 'incalculable gulf between the domain of the concept of nature, as the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible', than he proposed, in the rhetorical form of a moral imperative, to bridge exactly that gulf: 'the concept of freedom should make the end that is imposed by its laws real [*wirklich*] in the sensible world' (p. 176). To switch the metaphor: having booted the autonomous will out of the house of sensible intuition through the front door, used by philosophers, he now wanted to admit it through the back door, used by artists, because he recognized the advantage

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[36] Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 264. In a more recent essay Guyer argues that 'Kant means the sublime and the beautiful to represent different aspects of his overall conception of morality': the sublime, the 'negative' freedom from natural determinism; the beautiful, the 'positive' freedom of the law of practical reason ('The Symbols of Freedom in Kant's Aesthetics', in *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 222–41).

of the subject being able to perceive, albeit necessarily indirectly, the freedom it must postulate as the rational basis of morality. Far from dismissing those who would see a sign of the supersensuous, he turned to aesthetics to fulfil their wish, and he did so explicitly for the sake of morality. Indeed at the conclusion to the first part of the third *Critique*, on the aesthetic power of judgement, Kant declared taste itself to be 'at bottom a faculty for judging the sensuous rendering of moral ideas [*ein Beurtheilungsvermögen der Versinnlichung sittlicher Ideen*]' (§60/p. 356).

It was in connection with theorizing a means by which morality might enter into the phenomenal world 'with the appearance of an objective reality' (§49/p. 314) that Kant introduced what he called the aesthetic idea, which he defined as the sensible presentation of a rational idea to which no concept of the understanding is adequate. Though he discussed the aesthetic idea only fleetingly (in sections 49, 51, 53, 57, and 58 of the third *Critique*), it deserves consideration because its place in the genealogy of the Romantic concept of the symbol has received insufficient notice. Why this is so does not particularly concern me, but the reasons are probably to be sought rather in recent criticism of Kantian aesthetics than in criticism of Romantic symbolist theory, the latter having long been driven and debilitated by the internal logic of the mutual opposition between its two major factions, those sympathetic and those antipathetic to the concept of the symbol. It is striking and perhaps symptomatic that Jean-François Lyotard, in his lectures on the third *Critique*, not only passed over in silence the moral function that Kant ascribed to the aesthetic idea, but effectively assimilated the aesthetic idea to the sublime by describing the former as exceeding experience.[37] Kant himself, however, specified the sublime as what exceeds experience, understood as sensible intuition: 'That is sublime which even to be

[37] Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 65. See also his 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism', trans. Régis Durand, in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 71–82, at 77–9; and 'Presenting the Unpresentable: The Sublime', trans. Lisa Liebmann, *Artforum*, April 1982, 64–9. For a contrasting analysis that emphasizes the 'ethical turn' in the third *Critique*, see John Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's 'Critique of Judgment'* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), ch. 13.

able to think of demonstrates a faculty of the mind that surpasses every measure of the senses' (§25/p. 250).[38] To be sure, it is an object of the senses—something, specifically, from which we turn in displeasure, bewilderment, or fear—that enables us to discover the sublimity inhering in the mind's capacity to transcend the senses. And what still resonates with us in the analytic of the sublime is surely not its exaltation of reason at the expense of sensation, but rather its self-conscious, undismayed model of failed representation—the presentation of the unpresentable, in Lyotard's approving paraphrase. We turn to Kant now, in other words, for a theoretical legitimation of our own disillusionment with the possibilities of representation.

The later Kant's surprising preoccupation with unregulated appetites and immoderate consumption suggests that his attitude towards sensory experience may be summarized in a variant of T. S. Eliot's famous remark about emotion: that only those who are troubled by it can know what it means to want to escape from it.[39] From this perspective, the uncompromising dualism of the Kantian sublime appears as a wishful, even wistful, response to an underlying, never fully acknowledged, fear of its opposite: the very inseparability of reason and sense, mind and body, self and other, man and nature. But from another perspective, that of Kant's interest in the aesthetic symbolization of morality, dualism itself constitutes a problem in need of a solution, or at least of mitigation.

This claim may seem untenable in the face of the tension that even as sympathetic an interpreter as Guyer is compelled to admit exists between Kant's accounts of the beautiful and the sublime as symbols of morality: 'On the one hand, the purely rational nature of morality requires to be made palpable to our senses, and it turns to the aesthetic—above all, the beautiful—for that purpose; on the other hand, morality cannot be associated too closely with pleasure, but instead of simply turning back from the aesthetic altogether Kant finds an aesthetic experience which itself contains an element

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[38] Cf. §28/p. 264: 'Also ist die Erhabenheit in keinem Dinge der Natur, sondern nur in unserm Gemüthe enthalten.'

[39] Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919), in *Selected Essays*, 3rd edn. (London: Faber, 1951), 13–22, at 21. On Kant's preoccupation with the body, particularly in the *Anthropology*, see David Clark, *Bodies and Pleasures in Late Kant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, forthcoming).

of pain to drive the necessary wedge.'[40] Yet Kant himself used the phrase *fühlbar machen*, 'make palpable', precisely when analysing the sublime: 'Thus nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to the point of presenting those cases in which the mind can make palpable to itself the sublimity of its own vocation even over nature' (§28/p. 262). Insofar as the mind evidently depends on nature to disclose to it its independence of nature, Guyer's acknowledgement of Kant's unwillingness to dissociate morality from sensibility altogether is exactly to the point. What is at issue in Kant's conceptions of the sublime and the beautiful alike is, finally, less the inferiority of the senses to reason than the inadequacy of discursive representation. That both kinds of aesthetic experience, notwithstanding their contrast to one another, are deemed to be symbolic of morality is due to their very lack of discursiveness: that is, the absence of a conceptualizable correspondence between the aesthetic object and the rational idea or ideas with which that object may ultimately be associated. In either case, such a correspondence is established in reflection on the subject's response to the object, and not with respect to the object itself. The basis on which the beautiful, for example, serves as a symbol of the morally good is the analogy between judgements of beauty and moral judgements in their disinterestedness, autonomy, and universality (§59/p. 354).

Despite an admiring reference to the Second Commandment in his remark on the sublime as 'a negative presentation of morality' (§29/p. 275), Kant was reluctant to associate the sublime closely with religion because he did not want to reinforce what he called the 'contemptible disposition' to imagine God as a wrathful tyrant demanding humiliating obedience from his human vassals (§28/pp. 263–4). Accordingly, Kant seems to have considered aesthetic ideas, which he identified exclusively with the beautiful (§51/p. 320), preferable to the sublime in making moral and religious ideas intuitable. If the concept of the aesthetic idea was finally constrained by its dualistic premises, in that its mediation between the rational and sensible realms was permitted to rest on nothing more substantive than an analogy, it nonetheless offered a model of non-discursive representation that managed, in contrast to the sublime, to retain the object of sensation—in

[40] Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom*, 254.

particular, the human form (§17/p. 235)—as something affirmative. As Manfred Frank elaborates, 'the indemonstrability of the idea of reason is mirrored in the uninterpretability [*Inexponibilität*] of an inexhaustibly profound appearance [*sinnreichen Anschauung*], such as a work of art presents to us'.⁴¹ In the aesthetic idea, in other words, body is not bruised to pleasure soul.

By means of these reflections on the aesthetic idea, as in those on the sublime, Kant made a tentative overture to the world from which he had sought to free the mind. Because he denied any ontological connection between the suprasensible ideas of reason and their sensible representations, he could hardly argue that aesthetic ideas, or symbols (the term used in §59/pp. 351–4), were actually given in nature. But he did insinuate their derivation from nature: as the fullest expression of artistic genius, that 'inborn predisposition of the mind [*angeborene Gemüthsanlage* (*ingenium*)] *through which* nature gives the rule to art' (§49/pp. 313–17; Kant's emphasis). His Romantic successors, being more forthright in their attraction to an increased realism and naturalism—and hence in their antipathy to subjectivism—sought to exploit what they recognized as the potential of the aesthetic idea. And that is probably why, as Karl Viëtor observed, 'the debate about the sublime', which after all had preoccupied aesthetics for much of the eighteenth century, 'did not have as great a significance for the generation of Romantics as one might expect'.⁴²

If landscape was, as the painter Philipp Otto Runge hoped, to speak 'the language of nature', that is, in symbols, rather than the 'language of sensation', it could not remain purely subjective.⁴³ But just here, in transforming the aesthetic idea into the natural symbol, the Romantics had to contend with another burden bequeathed to them by the Enlightenment: a profound ambivalence about representation

⁴¹ Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1989), 137.

⁴² Viëtor, 'Die Idee des Erhabenen in der deutschen Literatur', in *Geist und Form: Aufsätze zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte* (Bern: Francke, 1952), 234–66, at 263.

⁴³ See Bengt Algot Sørensen, *Symbol und Symbolismus in den ästhetischen Theorien des 18. Jahrhunderts und der deutschen Romantik* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), 225–6.

itself. Whether or not one accepts Tzvetan Todorov's argument that the replacement of classical rhetoric in the eighteenth century by semiotics and aesthetics is attributable to the rise of a bourgeois ideology and the 'abolition of a vision of the world which possessed absolute and universal values', it is certainly true that the nature of figuration became as much of a preoccupation in the Enlightenment as its use had been in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[44] The catalogue of tropes gave way to the treatise on signs.

The use of signs was always an accommodation to the human conditions of lacking a fully intuitive knowledge, such as God may be supposed to have, and of lacking the ability to communicate thoughts telepathically. But so long as the total order of signs was thought to derive from and refer to the divine Logos, as it was in medieval Christendom and into the Renaissance, the institution and functioning of signs remained, in theory, independent of one another, the one divine and the other human. And that independence guaranteed the objectivity of signs. Those placed by God in nature might be intended specifically for human benefit and use, as Paracelsus affirmed, but they existed as signs with stable meanings whether or not they were interpreted correctly or recognized at all, for even if they escaped human notice they were always in their creator's eye.[45] Polysemy too could be understood as an ontological condition arising from the inherence of signs in the organization of the universe and consisting in the repetition of a sign at different levels of that organization: thus the fifteenth-century humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola explained that fire on earth corresponds to the life-giving sun in heaven and to the loving seraphic intellect in the region beyond the heavens. Since the first and third links of the signifying chain are based on an etymological connection, claimed by the pseudo-Dionysius, of the noun *seraphim* with the verb *saraph* ('to burn') in Hebrew, Pico's exposition demonstrates the functional equivalence of the verbal and visual in the order of signs.[46] In this macrocosm

[44] Todorov, *Théories du symbole* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 137.

[45] Paracelsus, *De natura rerum* (1537), bk. 9, in *Werke*, ed. Will-Erich Peukert (Basle: Schwabe, 1965–8), v. 121. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 73.

[46] Pico della Mirandola, *Heptaplus: De septiformi sex dierum Geneseos enarratione* (1498), 2nd preface, in *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti*

constructed of similitudes and correspondences it was not difficult to conceive works of verbal and visual art as microcosms, mirroring the world, if at a lesser degree of dignity, by partaking of its organizing principle. Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590–6) was perhaps the last major literary work in which such a structural affinity with the world was still assumed.

In an order of signs predicated on a hierarchical conception of reality, signification tends upwards, directing the mind towards that which, as the transcendental signified, is beyond signification. But when, in the early modern period, the tower of old, with its multiple levels of matching floor plans, was reduced to a single storey and divided into two rooms, one for everything inside the human mind and the other for everything outside it, signification was restricted to mediating between the two rooms. To translate the spatial metaphor: signification was now understood to connect thoughts to sensible marks. Without such marks, thoughts could never reveal their presence to the world outside, as Locke made explicit in an exemplary statement of the social necessity of signs:

Man, though he have great variety of Thoughts, and such, from which others, as well as himself, might receive Profit and Delight; yet they are all within his own Breast, invisible, and hidden from others, nor can of themselves be made appear. The Comfort, and Advantage of Society, not being to be had without Communication of Thoughts, it was necessary, that Man should find out some external sensible Signs, whereby those invisible *Ideas*, which his thoughts are made up of, might be made known to others.[47]

In the philosophy, as opposed to the culture, of the sign, signs were considered to be created precisely by being used. There was no longer a possibility of their remaining undiscovered, for they existed qua signs only in the mind itself. Since the ontological barrier between mind and world prevented the sign from being simultaneously an

vari, ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence: Vallecchi, 1942), 188: 'est apud nos ignis quod est elementum; Sol ignis in caelo est; est in regione ultramundana ignis saraphicus intellectus … . Elementaris urit, caelestis vivificat, supercaelestis amat.' Cf. pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, *De caelesti hierarchia*, 7. 1. 205b; *La Hiérarchie céleste*, ed. Günter Heil and Maurice de Gandillac (Paris: Cerf, 1958), 105.

[47] Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (4th edn., 1700), 3. 2. 1, ed. P. H. Nidditch (1975; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 404–5.

object of perception and an object of cognition, it had to cease being a sensible mark and instead become an idea, thereby joining the order of what it represented, in order to accomplish its purpose: 'the nature of the sign', according to the authors of the Port-Royal *Logic* (1662), 'consists in exciting in the mind the idea of the thing signified *by that of the signifying one* [*par l'idée de la chose figurante*]; and so long as this effect obtains—which is to say, so long as this double idea is excited—the sign exists, even when it is in itself destroyed [*détruite en sa proper nature*]'.[48] But the greater the number of operations required to interpret the sign, the greater the likelihood of misinterpreting it. What inhered in the sign was not meaning itself but, on the contrary, the possibility of its occlusion. That is why Rousseau, for one, persistently lamented the need for discursive signs, a need he associated, characteristically, with the rejection of the state of nature for that of culture. Originally, he imagined, man had not used mediated forms of communication because he could satisfy his needs directly: 'males and females united fortuitously according to chance, opportunity, and desire, without needing speech as the interpreter of what they had to say to each other; and they parted with the same ease.'[49]

In *Émile* Rousseau voiced the common complaint of Enlightenment philosophers that the attention given to signs themselves was a distraction from the things they signified.[50] The complaint attests to

[48] Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, *La Logique ou l'art de penser* (5th edn., 1683), 1. 4, ed. Pierre Claire and François Girbal, 2nd edn. (Paris: Vrin, 1981), 54 (my emphasis). See Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses*, 77–86, for an extended analysis of this notion of doubly mediated signification, variations of which Jean Starobinski had earlier pointed out in Locke and Rousseau (*Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La Transparence et l'obstacle*, 2nd edn. (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 168–70).

[49] Rousseau, *Essai sur l'origine et les fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755), pt. 1, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Gallimard, 1959–95), iii. 147.

[50] Rousseau, *Émile, ou De l'éducation* (1762), bk. 3, in *Œuvres complètes*, iv. 434: 'En général ne substituez jamais le signe à la chose que quand il vous impossible de la montrer. Car le signe absorbe l'attention de l'enfant, et lui fait oublier la chose réprésentée.' Cf. Starobinski, *Rousseau*, 175–6. Swift, on the other hand, had already exposed the impracticability of substituting things themselves for words: the scholars of the Lagado Academy, who communicate by displaying the objects to which they are referring, suffer under the weight of everything they must carry on their persons (*Gulliver's Travels* (1726), 3. 5, in *Prose Works*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1939–74), xi. 185–6).

the dilemma arising from defining knowledge in terms of connections between ideas and truth in terms of the proper alignment of ideas with signs. For if ideas could be expressed only through signs—chiefly, of course, words—then the culmination of human knowledge would be achieved only when the material being of signs had been entirely effaced by their signifying function: 'It were therefore to be wished that every one would use his utmost endeavours', Berkeley exhorted, 'to obtain a clear view of the ideas he would consider, separating from them all that dress and encumbrance of words which so much contribute to blind the judgment and divide the attention. … [W]e need only draw the curtain of words, to behold the fairest tree of knowledge, whose fruit is excellent, and within our reach.'[51] Tempting as the fruit was, however, the curtain proved remarkably difficult to pull aside. Because the correspondence between words and ideas could not be perfected without expanding our vocabulary to the point of uselessness, it had instead to be clarified by a different kind of multiplication of words: the process of defining, amplifying, exemplifying, etc., that information theory calls adding redundancy to the message. But as long as words were capable of multiple significations, those terms added by way of clarification would themselves, at least in theory, require clarification; and the adding of redundancy, never being complete, would forever defer the transparency of language to which it was directed. Certainty of the signified and efficiency of the signifier were therefore incompatible aims: the greater the redundancy in the message, the more obtrusive the presence of language itself.

Enlightenment semiotics classified linguistic signs as conventional or artificial, in contradistinction to natural signs. Natural signs were based on causal relations (e.g. in the indication of fire by smoke and of emotional states by their physical affects) or on mimetic relations (e.g. in painting)—though mimesis could be defined expansively enough to include artificial signs too, as in G. E. Lessing's *Laocoön* (1766).[52] But what distinguished natural signs of any type was that their

[51] *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), in *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (London: Nelson, 1948–57), ii. 40.

[52] Lessing, *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, in *Werke*, ed. H. G. Göpfert (Munich: Hanser, 1970–9), vi. 7–187. Cf. Todorov, *Théories du symboles*, 171–2.

signifying power inhered in them and was not humanly instituted (Condillac's term for artificial signs was *signes d'institution*). Though created artificially, painting could be said to use natural signs inasmuch as the images in paintings resembled images that viewers had formed or could form of objects in the world: these signs, according to the abbé Dubos in his application of semiotics to aesthetics, 'derive their force from the relation that Nature herself has taken care to establish between external objects and our organs, in order to provide for our preservation [*afin de procurer notre conservation*]'.[53] Like the correspondences in the medieval layered cosmos, natural signs in the modern bifurcated world were simply given to humanity—and indeed Berkeley considered the entire order of natural signs to constitute a divinely ordained 'visual language'.[54] But being in themselves purely imminent, in that the relation of signifier to signified was grounded in nature and fully intelligible without reference to a transcendent act of institution, natural signs were universally recognizable and required no interpretation. Consequently, they provided no opportunity for misinterpretation. In Byron's parody of the Rousseauvian state of nature, Don Juan and the Greek girl Haidee understand each other perfectly because, unable to speak each other's languages, they communicate solely by natural signs:

[53] Dubos, *Réflexions critiques sur la Poësie et sur la Peinture*, 6th edn. (Paris, 1755), i. 417. That mimetic representation might itself be a cultural convention—as Magritte's painting *The Treachery of Images* (1929), better known by its caption 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe', prompts us to consider—clearly did not occur to Dubos, who preferred painting to poetry on the grounds of accessibility: 'La Peinture employe des signes naturels dont l'énergie ne dépend pas de l'éducation.' As Todorov, *Théories du symbole*, ch. 7, notes, Dubos's alignment of painting with natural and poetry with artificial signification was accepted by James Harris in England (though he did not actually refer to *signs*) and by Moses Mendelssohn in Germany: see Harris's *Three Treatises* (London, 1744), 57–8, 72–3, 76–9; and Mendelssohn's 'Betrachtungen über die Quellen und die Verbindungen der schönen Künste und Wissenschaften' (1757), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. I. Elbogen et al. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1929–38; Stuttgart: Frommann, 1971–), i. 167–90. Cf. also Samuel Johnson's *Idler* no. 34 (9 Dec. 1758), in *The Yale Edition of the Works*, ed. W. J. Bate et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958–), ii. 106–8, at 106: 'poetry and painting, two arts which pursue the same end, by the operation of the same mental faculties, and which differ only as the one represents things by marks permanent and natural, the other by signs accidental and arbitrary'.

[54] Berkeley, *A New Theory of Vision* (4th edn., 1732), §147, *Works*, i. 231; *The Theory of Vision … Vindicated and Explained* (1732), §§38–40, *Works*, i. 264–5; *Alciphron, or The Minute Philosopher* (3rd edn., 1752), 4. 8–12, *Works*, iii. 150–8.

> though their speech
> Was broken words, they *thought* a language there,—
> And all the burning tongues the passions teach
> Found in one sigh the best interpreter
> Of nature's oracle—first love, that all
> Which Eve has left her daughters since her fall.[55]

In their perfect transparency natural signs could even seem to disappear entirely: 'Perhaps I speak wrongly when I say that painting uses signs', Dubos was pleased to concede, for 'it is Nature herself that painting places before our eyes'.[56] Exactly this—signification without signs, the complete dissolution of the signifier into the signified—defined for Enlightenment semiotics the ideal against which all signs were to be judged and to which artificial signs were to aspire. The desire to reduce artificial signs, especially language, to pure functionality was not without consequence for aesthetic values, as is evident not only in the eighteenth-century strictures concerning allegory, which we noted in the first chapter, but in the hostility of the first generation of German aestheticians—A. G. Baumgarten, G. F. Meier, and Moses Mendelssohn—to what they considered non-representational ornamentation in poetic language, such as the use of rhyme and wordplay. For Meier, in particular, it was axiomatic that artificial signs should *imitate* natural signs.[57] Thus natural signs were judged most successful when they seemed not to exist, and artificial signs most successful when they seemed to be natural signs. But because the role of semiotics within aesthetics was primarily restrictive, poetry produced in strict conformity to its dictates would scarcely have supported sustained interest from readers. Indeed such poetry would have been superfluous, for, denuded of distinctive linguistic features in the interest of greater transparency of meaning, it would have been indistinguishable from prose. Small wonder, then, that Wordsworth, whose critical statements, with

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[55] Byron, *Don Juan*, 2. 189.   [56] Dubos, *Réflexions critiques*, i. 417.
[57] Meier, *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften*, §§521 and 528, 2nd edn. (Halle, 1754–9), ii. 626, 635. See Sørensen, *Symbol und Symbolismus*, ch. 3; David Wellbery, *Lessing's 'Laocoon': Semiotics and Aesthetics in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 68–98; and Richard T. Gray, *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 13–27.

their invidious distinctions between natural and artificial language, were largely beholden to the preoccupations of Enlightenment semiotics, denied any 'essential difference' between poetry and prose.[58] What he did not recognize—though Coleridge did—is that his genuine poetic reform lay in not in his diction but in his subject-matter.

More profound, if less immediately apparent, was the legacy of Enlightenment semiotics to Romantic symbolist theory. Because it made no provision for numinousness or 'significance' (as defined in the previous chapter), the concept of the natural sign could not itself serve as a model for that of the symbol. Consisting in mimetic representations or relations of causation, natural signs could contribute to an empirical understanding of the world, but they were devoid of metaphysical content. Though their institution was attributable *to* God, they did not themselves reveal anything *about* him: 'the notion of a natural sign does indeed preserve the theological view of a divinely instituted language of nature,' David Wellbery remarks with reference to Berkeley and Baumgarten, 'but what this language of natural signs communicates is nothing but nature itself'.[59] Thus even if Coleridge, for instance, had Berkeley's 'visible language' in mind when he spoke of nature's conveying 'the bright Impressions of the eternal Mind' and the 'lovely shapes and sounds intellegible | Of that eternal language, which thy God | Utters', he was imputing to nature a metaphysical significance that Berkeley's concept neither assumed nor licensed.[60] Yet in one respect the concept of the natural sign was not, as Sørensen maintains, 'completely foreign' to that of the natural symbol.[61] What Enlightenment semiotics bequeathed to Romanticism was above all its anxiety about representation in general, and this anxiety manifested itself in the belief that the process of signification was incompatible with its goal, so that the achievement

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[58] Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), in *Prose Works*, i. 130, 132, 134.

[59] Wellbery, *Lessing's 'Laocoon'*, 28.

[60] Coleridge, 'Lectures on Revealed Religion', lect. 1, in *Lectures 1795: On Politics and Religion*, ed. Lewis Patton and Peter Mann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 89–119, at 94 and n. 3 (where the editors refer to Berkeley's *Theory of Vision*); 'Frost at Midnight' (1798), ll. 64–6, in *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Nicholas Halmi, Paul Magnuson, and Raimonda Modiano (New York: Norton, 2003).

[61] Sørensen, *Symbol and Symbolismus*, 33.

of the latter depended on the absence of the former (at least to consciousness).

The continuity between Enlightenment semiotics and Romantic symbolist theory consists less in their assumption of the normativity of intuitive cognition itself than in their opposition of intuitive to discursive cognition. Numinousness was supposed to be intuitable in the symbol, just as imitation or causation was in the natural sign. But in either case the privileging of sensible intuition demanded that the relationship between signifier and signified be defined, paradoxically, in unitary rather than binary terms. Hence the natural sign as pure signified, completely effaced by the cognition it enables, and the symbol as pure signifier, too meaningful to have any particular meaning. One way or another, signification had to be denied to be deemed successful. Nonetheless, while Enlightenment semiotics could teach the Romantics to overcome the dualism of signifier and signified, it could not teach them to overcome the dualism of subject and object, for even the natural sign had no place, as Foucault reminds us repeatedly, but in the human mind: *à l'intérieur de la connaissance.*

What remained for the Romantics, then, was to find a securer basis on which to claim that the numinousness of aesthetic ideas—their distinctive ability to stimulate a multitude of thoughts without being graspable in a determinate concept, to use Kant's language (§49/p. 315)—actually inhered in the objects they presented to the senses. For effacing the metaphoricity of symbols, hiding the creaking stage machinery of the representational process by assuring the audience that no performance was in fact taking place, was the surest way of banishing the suspicion, which as Paul de Man pointed out was not fully repressed in the third *Critique*, that the relation between the symbolic and rational orders was epistemologically unreliable.[62] Otherwise the Romantics would find themselves in the same position as the Cartesian exponents of the mechanical natural philosophy who, in order to forestall accusations of making arbitrary conjectures, had claimed the objective certainty of their hypotheses, even though their dualist ontology provided no epistemological justification for

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[62] De Man, 'The Epistemology of Metaphor', in *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 34–50, at 48.

such claims.[63] Thus the analogy on which Kant's aesthetic idea rested, the analogy between the suprasensible and the sensible, between the noumenal and the phenomenal, had to be strengthened into an identity.

[63] See Desmond Clarke, *Occult Powers and Hypotheses: Cartesian Natural Philosophy under Louis XIV* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), ch. 7; and Nadler, 'Doctrines of Explanation', 525–6.

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Uses of Philosophy

Der Gegensatz zwischen Subjektivität und Objektivität ist also kein reeller Gegensatz; die wahre Realität ist nur da, wo er schlechthin verschwindet.

Joseph Görres, *Aphorismen über die Kunst*

Under the dualistic premises of Enlightenment semiotics, the natural sign had no noumenal content; under those of Kantian aesthetics, the aesthetic idea or symbol had no objective reality, but only the subjective appearance of objective reality. The one could not be 'significant'; the other could not be 'natural'. Though Kant, rejecting the usage of the Leibnizo–Wolffian school, was the first philosopher of the Enlightenment to identify symbolism exclusively as an intuitive, in contradistinction to discursive, mode of representation, he disallowed the possibility of an inherent relation between symbolizing object and symbolized idea. Since ideas of reason, unlike concepts of the understanding, cannot be intuited directly, they must be presented indirectly by means of an analogy established between the idea itself and an intuitable object. The idea is evoked precisely through its disparity with the concept corresponding to that object, a process described in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* as 'the transfer of reflection on one object of intuition to an entirely different concept, to which perhaps no intuition can ever directly correspond'.[1] Symbolism

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[1] Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, §59, in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1900–), v. 351–4, at 352–3: '[die] Übertragung der Reflexion über einen Gegenstand der Anschauung auf einen ganz andern Begriff, dem vielleicht nie eine Anschauung direct correspondieren kann.' In the 'Meditationes de cognitione, veritate et ideis'

thus defined is a substitute for cognition, an accommodation to its impossibility in the face of the limits of the faculty of understanding. Kant's own implicit identification of aesthetic symbolism with the tradition of apophatic theology reveals how distant his concept of the analogical symbol still was from the Romantic concept of the synecdochical symbol.[2] The relation between these two concepts is one example among the many that intellectual history affords of the non-simultaneity of the contemporaneous.

By non-simultaneity I do not mean that the Romantic concept was anachronistic or retrogressive. If it was motivated generally by the loss of a comprehensive and ideologically coherent culture of the sign, then it was conditioned specifically by the assimilation of Enlightenment anxiety about representation. Only when the existence of symbols can be taken for granted does their interpretation become problematic and demand codification, as was the case in the Middle Ages. But the Romantics were so far from restoring a culture of the sign that they had to forgo determining how to interpret symbols in favour of establishing how to be certain of their existence in the first place. That their answer to this prior question was at best logically objectionable and at worst self-deceptive was conceded in the first chapter of the present study: that it was also thoroughly modern, and hence fundamentally different from the medieval culture of the sign, will be argued in the last three chapters. The Enlightenment in its multiplicity made the Romantic concept of a universal and inherently meaningful symbolism not only intellectually desirable, as the previous chapter elaborated, but philosophically possible, as the present chapter will elaborate.

Four developments in particular, each entailing in its way a rejection of dualism, were crucial: (1) the non-subjectivist recuperation of sensible intuition in the disciplines comprising 'natural history'; (2) the

(1684) Leibniz had distinguished the symbolic and the intuitive as the two species of 'adequate cognition': 'et quidem si simul adaequata et intuitiva sit, perfectissima est' (*Die philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C. I. Gerhardt (Berlin, 1875–90), iv. 422–6, at 422). For a lucid exposition of Kant's theory of symbolism, see John Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's 'Critique of Judgment'* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), ch. 14.

[2] Straining against his self-imposed differentiation of understanding, practical reason, and aesthetic judgement, Kant ventured, 'If one may call a mere mode of representation [*eine bloße Vorstellungsart*] cognition [*Erkenntnis*] … then all our cognition of God is merely symbolic' (§59/p. 353). Cf. Ch. 1 above at n. 34.

interpretation of humanity's cognitive relation to nature in terms of a microcosm–macrocosm analogy; (3) the increased acceptance of metaphysical monism after the reported affirmation of Spinoza's philosophy by the much-admired Lessing; and (4) the replacement, in the later eighteenth century, of mechanistic with vitalist theories of matter. These developments were not necessarily compatible with each other: vitalism, for example, rejected the mechanistic concepts that Spinoza applied more rigorously and comprehensively than anyone else. But by a process of syncretic assimilation the Romantics, especially Schelling (with active encouragement from Goethe), undertook to develop out of the various anti-dualist tendencies in Enlightenment thought 'a markedly unified interpretation of matter and spirit, of nature and history, as elements of a single ascending process'—in short, the *Naturphilosophie* on which the claims for the symbol would be based.[3]

The vindication of visibility in the understanding of nature was accomplished less effectively through the aestheticization of landscape, since that process (as noted in Chapter 2) was modelled on the imaginative constructivism of mechanistic explanation, than in natural history, a class of studies that included botany, zoology, geology, geography, and eventually physical anthropology. To be sure, the resurgent natural history of the late seventeenth century, which was closely related to projects to create a universal language, exhibited a rationalist reductiveness comparable to that of the mechanical philosophy: by confining its attention to visible forms and logical categories, it could dispense with the animistic concepts of which Renaissance natural history had been enamoured. But during the eighteenth century, as the limitations of mechanistic explanation with respect to living things became increasingly manifest, natural history developed explicitly into a methodological alternative to the mechanical philosophy: qualitative rather than quantitative, observational rather than experimental, descriptive rather than constructive, and characterized

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[3] Gian Franco Frigo, ' "Der stete und feste Gang der Natur zur Organisation": Von der Naturgeshichte zur Naturphilosophie um 1800', in Olaf Breidbach and Paul Ziche (eds.), *Naturwissenschaften um 1800: Wissenschaftskultur in Jena–Weimar* (Weimar: Böhlau, 2001), 27–45, at 44–5.

by a greater—or at least less conflicted—epistemological realism.[4] If the Linnaean system of classifying plants according to the number of their stamens and pistils was artificial, as its creator readily conceded, it was also supposed to be provisional, directed towards its own replacement by a system, of which Linnaeus himself assembled what he considered fragments, that would reproduce the inherent order of nature.[5]

Even a heuristic artificiality, however, was unacceptable to Linnaeus's chief rival among natural historians, the comte de Buffon. Distinguishing between 'mathematical truths', as products of human thought, and 'physical truths', as corresponding to objective reality, Buffon criticized the constructivist procedure of mathematics and Linnaean classification alike for offering tautologies instead of genuine explanations of nature—the very criticism that the mechanists, as we saw in the previous chapter, had themselves directed against the Scholastics a century earlier:

since definitions are all the sole principles on which everything is demonstrated [*établi*], and they are arbitrary and relative, all the results [*conséquences*] that can be derived from them are equally arbitrary and relative.

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[4] See Thomas Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 117; and Phillip Sloan, 'Natural History', in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), ii. 903–38. Convinced that a universal language founded on 'the nature of things' would serve taxonomy as a mnemonic aid, John Wilkins enlisted help from the botanist John Ray and the zoologist Francis Willoughby to include in his *Essay towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language* (1668) classifications of plants and animals: see Paolo Rossi, *Clavis universalis: arti mnemoniche e logica combinatoria da Lullo a Leibniz* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1960), 228–35, and *The Birth of Modern Science*, trans. Cynthia De Nardi Ipsen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), ch. 14.

[5] Linnaeus, 'Observationes in regnum vegetabile', §12, in *Systema naturae, sive regna tria naturae systematice proposita* (Leiden, 1735), fo. 10: 'No natural classification of plants [*Systema Plantarum Naturale*] has yet been constructed. … I do not maintain that the present system is natural … nor can a natural system be constructed before everything pertinent to it is fully known [*notissima sint*]. Meanwhile, in the absence of a natural system, artificial ones are altogether necessary.' Cf. also his *Philosophia botanica in qua explicantur fundamenta botanica*, §77 (Stockholm, 1751), 27 ('Methodi Naturalis Fragmenta studiose inquirenda sunt'), and his attempt at those 'Fragmenta methodi naturalis' in *Classes plantarum, seu systemata plantarum* (Leiden, 1738), 485–514; and see James Larson, *Reason and Experience: The Representation of Natural Order in the Work of Carl von Linné* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 47–9.

What are called mathematical truths are therefore reducible to identities of ideas, with no reality. … [They] are but truths of definition or, if you will, different expressions of the same thing, and are truths only in relation to [*relativement à*] the definitions already used.[6]

Whereas the mechanists had identified the world's legibility with its reducibility to mathematical relations, Buffon's 'conviction of the world's observability underlay his trust in its legibility. Science improves with the diligence with which one contemplates things.'[7] Physical truths, existing independently of the human mind, could be established only by careful observation of natural phenomena in their physical contexts and over time: 'a sequence of similar facts [*faits semblables*] or a frequent repetition and uninterrupted succession of the same events constitute the essence of the physical truth; what we call physical truth is therefore only a probability, but a probability so great that it is equivalent to a certainty.' This genealogical method of classification, Buffon maintained, would produce knowledge that was grounded in the order of nature itself rather than in an order of ideas.

If aesthetics informed Buffon's natural history—to an extent that proved detrimental to his scientific reputation, as his practice of varying the style in which wrote about species according to what he considered their degree of dignity was increasingly ridiculed by the end of the eighteenth century[8]—then conversely his natural history also informed eighteenth-century aesthetics, if indirectly. For

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[6] Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, 'Premier discours: De la manière d'étudier & de traiter l'Histoire Naturelle', in *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* (Paris, 1749–89), i. 1–62, at 54–5. On Buffon's conception of natural history and his attack on Linnaeus, see Phillip Sloan, 'The Buffon–Linnaeus Controversy', *Isis*, 67 (1976), 356–75; and James Larson, *Interpreting Nature: The Science of Living Form from Linnaeus to Kant* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 10–15. Sloan, 'The Buffon–Linnaeus Controversy', 368 and n. 59', remarks the resemblance between Buffon's two kinds of truths and Leibniz's two kinds of necessity, geometric and physical (a distinction elaborated in the 'Discours préliminaire' of the *Théodicée*, published in 1710).

[7] Wolf Lepenies, *Autoren und Wissenschaftler im 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Hanser, 1988), 94.

[8] See Lepenies, *Das Ende der Naturgeschichte* (1976; Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978), 142–7, and *Autoren und Wissenschaften*, 63–89; and Harald Weinrich, 'The Style Is the Man Is the Devil', in *The Linguistics of Lying and Other Essays*, trans. Jane K. Brown and Marshall Brown (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 129–48, at 133–8.

Buffon's empiricism, insistence on the temporality of natural history, and attentiveness to the physical environment of species were to find exact parallels in the pioneering *History of the Art of Antiquity* published in 1764 by Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who just over a decade earlier, while employed as a private librarian in Saxony, had made copious extracts from the first three volumes of the *Histoire naturelle*.[9] These parallels were themselves underpinned by the epistemological realism that Winckelmann, whatever the process by which he acquired it, certainly shared with Buffon, a realism comprising the basic principles of *adaequatio intellectus et rei* and *adaequatio apparentiae et essentiae*. Truth could not only be known but be seen. Just as the naturalist assumed the possibility of discerning the order of nature, the antiquarian assumed that of discerning the essence of art. Thus although Winckelmann's *History* was highly subjective—and might be cited to support Goethe's famous judgement that its author was always occupied with himself without actually observing himself—it was not subjectivist. Had he not been convinced of the empirical accessibility of objective truth, Winckelmann could hardly have emphasized extensive direct observation as the advantage he enjoyed over other antiquarians: 'In this history of art, I have tried to discover the truth, and because I have had every opportunity for leisurely study of the works of ancient art, and because I have spared nothing to acquire the necessary knowledge, I believed myself prepared to compose this treatise. … All that I have cited as evidence—paintings, statues, gems, and coins—I have myself seen and examined repeatedly.' Lest that appeal to experience seem insufficient, however, he also appealed, in the sentence I omitted from the foregoing quotation, to an almost ontological affinity with his object of study: 'Since my youth, the love of

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[9] Lepenies, *Autoren und Wissenschaftler*, 93–120; and Élisabeth Décultot, *Johann Joachim Winckelmann: Enquête sur la genèse de l'histoire de l'art* (Paris: PUF, 2000), 193–215. The latter offers the first extensive examination of Winckelmann's commonplace books, which, having been transferred from Rome to Paris in 1798, are now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Admittedly, since theories of the climatic role in cultural development would have been known to Winckelmann from other works he excerpted—notably Dubos's *Réflexions critiques* (1719), Thomas Blackwell's *Essay into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735), and Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* (1748)—he scarcely needed to extrapolate such a theory from the *Histoire naturelle*.

art has been my greatest passion, and though education and circumstances led me on a very different track, my inner calling has always made itself felt [*so meldete sich dennoch allezeit mein innerer Beruf*].'[10]

In 1777 Johann Gottfried Herder, another attentive reader of natural history, eulogized Winckelmann as a taxonomist of art who had discovered order in 'the forest of perhaps 70,000 statues and busts' in Rome; and twenty-three years later he had occasion, in a corrective to Kant's treatment of symbolism as analogically based representation, to avail himself of Winckelmann's epistemological realism.[11] While affirming that the beautiful could symbolize morality, Herder rejected Kant's explanation of how it did so: such symbolism was founded not on an analogy in the subject's mind, but on the properties in objects themselves. By way of argument, he first invoked the concept of the natural sign: '*Every thing signifies*, that is, it bears the form of what it is; the most representative, expressive, incisive things are thus *natural symbols* [*die darstellendsten, ausdrückendsten, prägnantsten sind also die* Natursymbole]. The colour white indicates what it is *itself*, something unmixed; red, the quickest, liveliest colour. … '[12] Meanings rooted in the ontological content of phenomena—what Herder called *Natursinne*—were to be distinguished from purely conventional associations, such as of constancy with blue, love with red, hope with green, and so on. But because natural signification, as theorized in Enlightenment semiotics, did not itself entail the inherence of *metaphysical* significance in phenomena, Herder had also to invoke the Winckelmannian principle that the supersensuous essence of Greek art was revealed precisely through its sensuous form

[10] Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, ed. Ludwig Goldscheider (Vienna: Phaidon, 1934), 16; *History of the Art of Antiquity*, ed. Alex Potts and trans. Henry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006), 76. (Both the Phaidon edition and Getty translation follow the text of the first edition.) Goethe's comment appears near the end of his essay 'Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert' (1805), *GA* xiii. 407–50, at 444: 'doch finden wir hier auch jene altertümliche Eigenheit, daß er sich immer mit sich selbst beschäftigte, ohne sich dabei zu beobachten. Er denkt nur an sich, nicht über sich. … ' Cf. Lepenies, *Autoren und Wissenschaftler*, 114.
[11] Herder, 'Denkmal Johann Winckelmanns', in *Werke in zehn Bänden*, ed. Ulrich Gaier et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985–2000), ii. 630–73, at 651.
[12] Herder, *Kalligone: Vom Angenehmen und Schönen* (1800), 3. 4. 1, in *Werke*, viii. 956.

(a principle that had accounted for the antiquarian's own practice of combining minute physical description with expansive allegorical interpretation of artworks):

Here too the Greeks were the wisest masters. Their allegories and personifications … are virtually natural symbols [*fast Natursymbole*]. … Nowhere does the eye of imagination [*Phantasie*] stretch beyond nature; even the imagined attributes seem intuitively beautiful [*anschaulich-schön*], arranged with artistic and natural wisdom. This pleases the eye by elevating the spirit, for the unnatural in sensuous symbols [*Unnatur … in anschaulichen Symbolen*] is intolerable to the educated eye.[13]

Objecting to the abstraction of Kant's aesthetic theory, and hence its neglect of art, Herder redefined the symbol from the perspectives of its artistic manifestation and its social purpose. If this symbol was natural in one respect, because its meaning consisted in the essence of the symbolizing object itself, it was still artificial in another respect, because the symbolizing object was after all a work of art. Herder's assumption that art originated in the imitation of nature permitted him to conceive art as a second nature, but not to fuse aesthetics with natural philosophy, as Goethe and Schelling would in effect do in their mutually reinforcing discussions of the symbol in nature.[14] That fusion was possible only under the aegis of a monist metaphysics that affirmed the 'true reality' described in the epigraph to this chapter: a reality in which the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity disappeared. To be sure, Herder was resolutely anti-dualist, his dialogue *God: Some Conversations* (1787), an important antecedent of Romantic *Naturphilosophie*, having attempted nothing less than to rescue Spinozist naturalism from mechanism by means

[13] Ibid. 958. Cf. Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Grieschischen Wercke in der Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst* (1755), in *Kleine Schriften, Vorreden, Entwürfe*, ed. Walther Rehm (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), 27–59; *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 128–207 (or *History of the Art of Antiquity*, 186–227). On Herder's reception of Winckelmann (which, though favourable, was not uncritical), see Peter Szondi, 'Antike und Moderne in der Ästhetik der Goethezeit', in *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie I*, ed. Senta Metz and Hans-Hagen Hildebrandt (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), 11–265, at 47–64; and Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 27–9.

[14] Cf. Szondi, 'Antike und Moderne', 63; Heinz Gockel, *Mythos und Poesie: Zum Mythosbegriff in Aufklärung and Frühromantik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1981), 175.

of Leibnizian vitalism—that is, by reinterpreting the single, infinite substance that Spinoza called *Deus sive natura*, God or nature, as a living force.[15] But while he could not have failed to recognize himself implicated in Kant's denunciation of Spinozism and hylozoism (in sections 72–3 of the third *Critique*), Herder confined his refutation to points of aesthetics, for which purpose it sufficed to assert the operation of 'natural' symbolism in art. Thus when, in the final paragraph of *Kalligone*, he referred to 'the poetry of nature' (*die Poesie der Natur*), he meant poetry *about* nature, a poetry to which, like Wordsworth in his nearly contemporaneous preface to the third edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Herder imagined that modern scientific knowledge might contribute.[16]

By contrast, Karl Philipp Moritz meant a symbolism *in* nature when he began a reflection on the *Apollo Belvedere*—the statue that Winckelmann had famously exalted as the 'highest ideal' of ancient art—by asking rhetorically, 'Isn't everything in nature full of meaning [*voller Bedeutung*], and isn't everything a sign of something larger [*etwas Größern*] that is revealed in it?'[17] That the contemplation of art should have prompted the thought of nature may be explained by Moritz's view, articulated in an essay on mimesis, that artistic works and natural organisms were functionally equivalent as sources of beauty on account of their autonomy and intrinsic principles of organization and development: 'What alone can form the pleasure of the beautiful for us is that by which the beautiful itself arose, the prior tranquil contemplation of nature and art as a single vast whole,

[15] On *Gott: Einige Gespräche* (in Herder's *Werke*, iv. 679–794) see David Bell, *Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 1984), 104–45; Dieter Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewußtsein: Untersuchungen zu Hölderlins Denken (1794–1795)* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), 172–6; and Frederick Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 181–3. Zammito, *Genesis*, 243–7, interprets *Gott* as a major irritant to Kant, who in 1785–6 had reviewed disparagingly the first two volumes of his former student's *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, on which see also below at n. 51.

[16] Herder, *Kalligone*, 3. 4. 12, in *Werke*, viii. 964; cf. Wordworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), in *Prose Works*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), i. 140, 142.

[17] Moritz, 'Signatur des Schönen: Bei der Betrachtung des Apollo von Belvedere' (1793), in *Schriften zur ästhetik und Poetik*, ed. Hans Joachim Schrimpf (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962), 201–2.

which … in itself complete, contains within itself the goal and purpose of its being.'[18] The basis of this perception was the assumption of an analogy, which Moritz most likely derived from Shaftesbury, between the human artist and the divine creator. In accordance with that analogy, Moritz identified artistic activity itself, as opposed to its products, as mimetic. To imitate nature was therefore to reproduce the process of its creation:

Each beautiful whole [*Ganze*] from the hand of the visual artist [*des bildenden Künstlers*] is a copy in miniature [*im Kleinen ein Abdruck*] of the highest beauty in the vast whole of nature. … When nature itself has imprinted a sense of its creative power in someone's entire being and the *measure* [*Maaß*] of the beautiful in his eyes and soul, then he is not content to view nature; he must imitate it, study it [*ihr nachstreben*], eavesdrop on its secret workshop, and form and create with a fire in the belly [*mit der lodernden Flamm' im Busen bilden und schaffen*], just as nature does.[19]

If artists imitated God by creating works of non-discursive significance, as Moritz defined beauty, then it followed that God himself must have created such a work, in which case inferences about nature could easily be drawn from observations on art. Hence the claim,

[18] Moritz, 'Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen' (1788), in *Schriften*, 63–93, at 86: 'Was uns daher allein zum wahren Genuß des Schönen bilden kann, ist das, wodurch das Schöne selbst entstand; *vorhergegangne ruhige Betrachtung der Natur und Kunst, als eines einzigen grossen Ganzen*, das … in sich selbst vollendet, den Endzweck und die Absicht seines Daseyns in sich selber hat.'

[19] Ibid. 73 (a passage repeated almost verbatim in 'Grundlinien zu einer vollständigen Theorie der schönen Künste' (1789), in *Schriften*, 121). Cf. Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy: or Advice to an Author* (1711), 1. 3, in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Philp Ayres (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), i. 111: 'a *Poet* is indeed a second *Maker*: a just Prometheus, under Jove. Like that Sovereign Artist or universal Plastick Nature, he forms *a Whole*, coherent and proportion'd in it-self, with due Subjection and Subordinacy of constituent Parts.' While demurring from Bengt Algot Sørensen's imprecise assimilation of Moritz into the *naturmystische Tradition*, I accept his contention of Moritz's indebtedness to Shaftesbury (*Symbol und Symbolismus in den ästhetischen Theorien des 18. Jahrhunderts und der deutschen Romantik* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), ch. 6). A century before Shaftesbury, and with greater practical consequence for artists, Karel van Mander in *Het Schilder-Boeck* (1604) had defined two paradigms of artistic creation, one (exemplified by Jan van Eyck) consisting in imitation of natural phenomena and the other (exemplified by Hendrick Goltzius and encouraged by van Mander himself) in emulating and cultivating past techniques and styles: see Ricardo de Mambro Santos, *ll canone metamorfico: saggio sulla pittura del Manierismo fiammingo e olandese* (Sant'Oresta: Apeiron, 2002).

in 'The Signature of the Beautiful', that 'everything surrounding us turns into a sign; it becomes significant [*bedeutend*], it turns into a language'. But what was the source of that language?

Moritz's theory of art recalls Leibniz's monadology, according to which the world is composed of autonomous, immaterial substances or principles of action, each 'representing the entire universe exactly in its own way and from a particular point of view'.[20] But whereas Leibniz, in section 64 of the *Monadology*, had rigorously distinguished products of human invention (as aggregates of discrete things) from natural organisms (as teleologically organized wholes), Moritz sought to reconcile one with the other by means of his revisionary concept of imitation: as the monad was related to the universe, so would the work of art be to nature. I use the conditional mood here, however, because Moritz's theory lacked an equivalent to Leibniz's doctrine of pre-established harmony, which explained the relations of the monads to each other and to the universe as having been determined by God *ab initio*. Thus the unity of artistic and natural beauty as proclaimed by Moritz had no more claim to objective validity than did the analogy that Kant recognized—and acknowledged to be purely subjective—between works of art and natural organisms on the basis of their 'purposiveness', or conformity to the conditions of human judgement and cognition. Indeed, the very principle that enabled Moritz to identify art with nature, and vice versa, militated against his doing so, for the autonomy and organic-like unity of art implied its independence from nature: 'Like the world, the work of art is a self-sufficient totality; precisely to the extent that it resembles the world, the work of art no longer needs to affirm its connection with the world.'[21] The principal role assigned to art in Moritz's aesthetics was not therefore to represent nature, but, as in Diderot's metaphor of the *Encyclopédie* as a *grand paysage*, to substitute for it. So although Moritz's concept of non-discursive, monadological representation offered the Romantics an important precedent—which we shall

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[20] Leibniz, 'Système nouveau de la nature et de la communication des substances, aussi bien que de l'union qu'il y a entre l'âme et le corps' (1695), in *Die philosophischen Schriften*, iv. 474–87, at 484; *Monadologie* (published posthumously, 1714), §§7, 56–7, 62, in *Monadologie und andere metaphysische Schriften*, ed. U. J. Schneider (Hamburg: Meiner, 2002), 110, 112, 132, 134, 136.

[21] Tzvetan Todorov, *Théories du symbole* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 187.

encounter again in Chapter 5 in the context of Schelling's attempt to ground symbolism historically in Greek mythology—it remained, like Herder's concept of artistic symbolism, too specific to art to be adopted without modification for the purpose of theorizing the inherent meaningfulness of the world to humanity.

That Moritz had to leave unresolved the ontological status of the relation of art to nature, and hence of humanity to divinity, attests to the difficulty of reviving the microcosm–macrocosm analogy in the absence of the semiotic culture that had sustained that analogy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The difficulty consisted, in effect, of reversing a process that was assumed to have reached its conclusion in the eighteenth century, when, according to the *Encyclopédie*, 'le mot de *microcosme*, non plus que celui de *macrocosme*, ne sont plus usités'.[22] To the extent the analogy indeed suffered the fate described by the Encyclopedists, it did so not because it was simply abandoned in the early modern period, but because it was transformed so radically as to be detached from its metaphysical foundation. Supposing it were possible to identify the moment at which that transformation began, we might follow Ernst Cassirer in referring to the publication of a short philosophical treatise in Paris in 1510. Its title was *On the Wise Man* (*De sapiente*), its author the French humanist Charles de Bovelles, better known by the Latinized version of his name, Carolus Bovillus.[23] Since this treatise appears to have been unknown to the Romantic theorists of the symbol, we need not be distracted by questions of its influence: its historical role was limited to its exemplariness. Indeed, it was exemplary in precisely the way Leibniz's

[22] 'Microcosme', in Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert (eds.), *L'Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris and Neufchâtel, 1751–72), x. 487.

[23] A critical edition of *De sapiente*, by Raymond Klibansky, was included as an appendix to Cassirer's *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), 299–412. I have used the more recent edition by Pierre Magnard, *Le Livre du sage* (Paris: Vrin, 1982), citations of which are hereafter included parenthetically in the text. On the combination of traditional and novel ideas in Bovillus's treatise ('perhaps the most remarkable and in some respects the most characteristic production of Renaissance philosophy'), see Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*, 93–7; and *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, 2nd edn. (Berlin: Cassirer, 1911–22), i. 61–72.

Monadology was not, namely in theorizing the *interaction* of the microcosm with the macrocosm. For the monads were supposed to be windowless mirrors, representing the universe while remaining impervious to it and to one another, entirely dependent for their creation, internal development, and annihilation on the deity—or the philosopher—who alone was in a position to view the spectacle.

In order to appreciate the way in which Bovillus heralded modern philosophical idealism with his reconception of the microcosmic man, we must first understand the fundamental premises of the microcosmic tradition. Of the five basic types of microcosmic models distinguished by Rudolf Allers, three were predominant from the time of the late Stoa to that of medieval humanism: first, the elementaristic, according to which man is composed of the same elements or substances as the rest of the universe (as in twelfth-century cosmology); second, the structural, which is concerned with the animating forces of man and the world (as in astrology and the Neoplatonic doctrine of the world-soul); and third, the holistic, which postulates an analogy between human social organizations and nature (as in the topos of the organismic state).[24] These three types of microcosm shared the metaphysical assumption of the underlying orderliness of the universe of which humanity is part, and the epistemological function of providing a basis for acquiring knowledge analogically—that is, by means of the analogies, similitudes, and sympathies between the microcosm and the macrocosm. A knowledge of the large world was implied in a knowledge of the small one, and vice versa. According to Paracelsus, a contemporary of Bovillus, understanding how the elements of earth, water, fire, and air operate in nature enables one to understand human physiology, for man is created out of the same elements, even if they assume a different form: 'in man earth is flesh, water is blood, fire is warmth [*wermi*], and air is his breath [*balsam*].'[25]

[24] Allers, 'Microcosmus from Anaximandros to Paracelsus', *Traditio*, 2 (1944), 319–407. On the exemplary medieval presentation of *homo microcosmus*, both elementaristic and structural, in Bernardus Silvestris's *Cosmographia*, see Brian Stock, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Bernard Sylvester* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 197–219, 275–6.

[25] Paracelsus, *Ein mantisches Entwurf* (*c*.1536), in *Medizinische, naturwissenschaftliche und philosophische Schriften*, ed. Karl Sudhoff (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1922–33), x. 637–59, at 649.

Treating the unknown afflictions of the body and restoring the harmony of the four elements within it was therefore a matter of applying to it a knowledge of the relations of the four elements outside it.

If the practical limit of microcosmic knowledge was defined by the ability to recognize the signs of the connections between the big world and the small, the theoretical limit was defined by the synecdochical nature of the relationship between those two worlds. So long as the microcosm was conceived as part of the macrocosm, the play of signification between the two was contained within a closed system, which in its totality—that is, in its macrocosmic form—constituted the extent of what could be known. As Foucault noted, the participation of the microcosm in the macrocosm was supposed to ground and guarantee the meaning of the analogy, and thus to avert the infinite regress that a knowledge based solely on resemblances entails, since every sign must be interpreted by reference to a further sign.[26] Yet this danger, a version of the familiar 'third man' dilemma (whereby the attempt to relate one entity to another necessitates positing a third entity), still arose within the limits imposed by the macrocosm, as is revealed almost comically in Paracelsus's conception of man and nature as mirror images of each other:

Thus man is an image in a mirror, composed throughout of the four elements. … Hence philosophy is nothing but the knowledge of what is reflected in the mirror. Just as someone in a mirror can never make his being understandable to anyone or enable anyone to recognize what he is because he stands there only as a dead image, so too is man in himself; and nothing comes from him, but only from external knowledge, for whose structure he in turn is the mirror.[27]

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[26] Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 45.

[27] Paracelsus, *Das Buch Paragranum* (first version, 1530), in *Schriften*, viii. 31–113, at 72: 'also ist der mensch ein bildnis in eim spiegel, gesetzt hinein durch die vier element. … darumb so ist die philosophei nichts anders, allein das ganz wissen und erkantnus des dings, das den glanz im spiegel gibt. und zu gleicherweis wie der im spiegel niemants mag seins wesens verstand geben, niemants zu erkennen geben, was er sei, dan allein es stat da wie ein tote bildnus, also ist der mensch an im selbs auch und aus ime wird nichts genomen, allein was aus der eußern erkantnus kompt, des figur er im spiegel ist.' For a brief exposition of the principles of Paracelsian medicine, see Allen Debus, *The English Paracelsians* (London: Oldbourne, 1965), 19–32. Strictly

In short, mirror on mirror mirrored is all the show.

When Bovillus, however, entered this hall of mirrors, he effectively put an end to the show by considering the human role in it exclusively as one of spectatorship. Man is a mirror of nature, Bovillus affirmed in chapter 26 of *De sapiente*, but 'it is the nature of a mirror to be placed outside everything, facing and opposite it [*extra omnia locatum sit, cunctis adversum et oppositum*]' (p. 178). Thus 'the true place of a mirror and of man is in opposition to, at the extremity of, at a distance from, and in the negation of the universe [*in oppositione, extremitate, distantia et negatione universorum*]'—a position of externality from which the universe is absent but in which its reflection can be formed (p. 180). Here man takes in the whole of the universe, becoming, as it were, its eye (*universorum oculum*) as well as its reflection (p. 182). If it seems perverse to speak of externality and assimilation in connection with the idea of the microcosm, which after all derives a relationship of identity from one of participation, that perversity is precisely the point. Without renouncing the devotion to analogical structure which characterizes medieval microcosmic thought—indeed he rehearsed the analogies at length in his first twenty-one chapters—Bovillus radically redefined the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm in terms of knowledge. The microcosm had always been understood to *serve the purpose of knowledge*, by establishing the conditions in which knowledge could be acquired; but for Bovillus it was also *constituted by knowledge*. Man was a microcosm not only because his physical constitution was analogous to that of the world, but also because he was capable of forming a mental image of the world. Like the parasitic snail that devours its host jellyfish from within, the microcosm now incorporated the macrocosm into itself, in the form of knowledge. Bovillus invoked two geometric figures, the circle and the triangle, to explain humanity's epistemological situation:

if you place all things around the circumference of the universe [*omnia in mundi circumferentia*] (that is, in the firmament), you will have to place

speaking, of course, the relationship described by Paracelsus could not be one of mirroring because a reflection is perfectly congruent with the reflected object and has no independent ontological status. Microcosm and macrocosm are supposed to be, among other things, signs of each other, but specular reflections are not signs (see Umberto Eco, 'Sugli specchi', in *Sugli specchi e altri saggi: il segno, la rappresentazione, l'illusione, l'immagine* (1985; Milan: Bompiani, 2001), 9–37, esp. 22–5).

man in the middle and at the centre [*in medio et centro*]; for then the entire circumference of the universe will appear perfectly transparent and will be revealed to him [*liquido pelleuceat atque revelatur*]. But if you place all things along the base of a triangle, you will have to place man at the apex of the triangle, towards which the entire base flows along the two sides [*quo tota basis per amborum laterum angustias defluit*] and the entire surface of the triangle leads, and from which the entire base is visible and easily observable all at once [*unde tota simul basis est conspicua et facile spectanda*] (p. 178).

These tropes were perhaps not felicitously chosen or elaborated, since it may be objected that what is perfectly transparent is precisely *not* visible; but they do suggest that in Bovillus's anthropocentrism the physical position of man in the universe was a matter of relative indifference.

Bovillus was a transitional figure to the extent that he wished to preserve the medieval definition of the microcosm in physical terms, as an entity that could be known by means of its visible analogy to the macrocosm, while proposing a new definition of it in epistemological terms, as an entity that acquired its identity by means of knowing—that is, recreating within itself—the world. One microcosm represented the world by virtue of resembling it; the other resembled it by virtue of representing it.[28] At issue was a variant of the conflict, described in the previous chapter, between vertical and horizontal conceptions of reality. Bovillus himself evidently remained unaware of the incompatibility of the two definitions, but the logical implications of the effort to define a relation of part and whole as one of subject and object were still to be seen three hundred years later, complicating the Romantics' revival of the idea of the microcosm after it had been declared moribund by the propagandists of Enlightenment.

What were those implications? First, if the microcosm were man in the act of knowing, then the macrocosm would have to be the world in the act of being known. Because human knowledge of the world would in practice never be complete but always capable of being increased, the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm

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[28] Fernand Hallyn, 'La Microcosme et l'incomplétude de la représentation', *Romanica Gandensia*, 23 (1994), 257–67, at 265.

could only be dynamic, whereas in its traditional conception it was static, for although one could have a greater or lesser knowledge of that relationship, the structure of similitudes on which it was based was itself assumed to be divinely ordained and determinate. And because knowledge would increase over time, the dynamic relation of microcosm to macrocosm would also be a temporal one. The more we knew of the world, the more fully we would become a microcosm of it. Thus microcosmic identity could be anticipated or hoped for, as it seems to have been in a cryptic parenthetical phrase from Novalis's fragmentary encyclopedia project, *Das allgemeine Brouillon*: 'Microcosm in potentia.'[29] Read in conjunction with his repeated laments that the world had yet to be understood properly, that its meaning was presented in a language whose characters could no longer be read, Novalis's parenthesis becomes comprehensible as an affirmation of humanity's power and potential to become a microcosm. It was as an aspiration that the microcosm served as 'the highest idea for man'.[30] But if increasing knowledge were the means of fulfilling that aspiration, then the goal would never be attained, not only because human knowledge would always be imperfect but, more fundamentally, because the means and the end would simply be incompatible with each other.

That was the second implication of defining the relation of microcosm to the macrocosm as the mental interiorization of the latter by the former. Under this definition, indeed, it would be more accurate to speak not of a single world of which we are a fully representative part, but of two worlds, outer and inner, which are ontologically distinct even if they correspond to each other in some way. For in order to incorporate the world into ourselves in thought, we must

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[29] Novalis, *Das allgemeine Brouillon* (1798–9), fr. 1012, in *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe*, ed. Richard Samuel and Hans-Joachim Mähl (Munich: Hanser, 1978–82), ii. 701.

[30] Novalis, [*Vorarbeiten zu verschiedenen Fragmentsammlungen*] (1798), fr. 314, in *Werke*, ii. 383; and cf. fr. 102: 'At one time everything was a spiritual phenomenon [*Geisteserscheinung*]. Now we see nothing but a dead repetition, which we do not understand. The meaning of the hieroglyphics is wanting. We are still living on the fruits of better times' (p. 334). See also Hans Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* (1981; Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), ch. 16; and Florian Roder, *Menschwerdung des Menschen: Der magische Idealismus im Werk des Novalis* (Stuttgart: Mayer, 1997), 185–6.

oppose ourselves to it as subject to object. This oppositional relationship cannot simultaneously be a participatory relationship, for the categories of identity and difference are logically incommensurate with those of part and whole. Oscillation between the two kinds of relation is possible, but coexistence is not. To express the situation by an analogy: the food one consumes can become a part of one's own substance, but it must first be something different from that substance. Such oscillation between participation and opposition is detectable in another fragment of Novalis's concerning the microcosmic man: 'Our body is *part* [*Theil*] of the world—better put, a member [*Glied*]: it expresses the *independence* [*Selbständigkeit*], the analogy with the whole—in short, the concept of the microcosm. To this member the whole must correspond: so many senses, so many modes of the universe—the universe a complete analogy of the human being in the body [*das Universum völlig ein Analagon des menschlichen Wesens in Leib*]—soul and mind'.[31] In the space of a single sentence the self begins as a part of the world, only to assert its separation from the world so as to subordinate the world to it.

The strain to which the concept of the microcosm was subjected by being defined in cognitive terms is more evident in the rhapsodic conclusion to the geologist Henrik Steffens's *Contributions to the Internal Natural History of the Earth* of 1801, and in those passages that Coleridge in turn plagiarized from Steffens in his own *Theory of Life* of 1816. With respect to his physical constitution, Steffens explained, 'man has the entire world *against* him [*Der Mensch hat die ganze Welt* gegen *sich*]'—a sentence that Coleridge translated more mildly as 'man has the whole world in counterpoint to him'. Possessing the 'most perfect osseous structure, the least and most insignificant covering', the most adaptive and least instinctual relation to his environment, and the highest degree of individuation, man manifests nature's centripetal inclination (*centripetale Tendenz*), meaning a movement away from a passive physical responsiveness to external stimuli and towards an active mental regulation and assertion of the self. But with respect to his reason, through which all of nature finds its perfection (*Vollendung*) and inner harmony (*innere Harmonie*), 'man carries an entire world *within* himself [*Der Mensch trägt eine ganze*

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[31] Novalis, *Vorarbeiten*, fr. 483, in *Werke*, ii 423.

Welt in sich]'. Emphasizing that humanity represents nature most fully in its distinctiveness from all other living creatures, Coleridge's amplification of Steffens's claim recalls Bovillus's image of man contemplating nature from the point of a triangle: 'Now, for the first time at the apex of the living Pyramid, it is Man and Nature, but Man himself is a syllepsis, a compendium of Nature—the Microcosm!'[32] Just as, in *Paradise Regained*, Satan and Christ cannot both stand at the pinnacle of the Temple, so nature and man cannot both occupy the top of Coleridge's pyramid; but whereas Satan must fall, nature can be assimilated.

The *Theory of Life* did not itself elaborate on why the possession of reason permitted man to be considered a microcosm, but an explanation eventually appeared in Coleridge's eleventh philosophical lecture (delivered on 8 March 1819), again employing images reminiscent of Bovillus:

At once the most complex and the most individual of creatures, man, taken in the ideal of his humanity, has been not inaptly called the microcosm of the world in compendium, as the point to which all the lines converge from the circumference of nature. This applies to his sum of being, to his powers collectively; but we find him gifted, as it were, with a three-fold mind: the one belonging to him specifically, arising, I mean, necessarily out of the peculiar mechanism of his nature, and by this he beholds all things perspectively from his relative position as man; the second, in which those views are again modified, too often disturbed and falsified by his particular constitution and position as this or that particular individual; and the third, which exists in all men [potentially], and in its germ, though it requires both effort from within and auspicious circumstances from without to evolve it into effect.

[32] Steffens, *Beyträge zur innern Naturgeschichte der Erde* (Freiberg, 1801), 316; Coleridge, *Theory of Life*, in *Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), i. 481–557, at 550–1. Cf. Fritz Paul, *Henrich Steffens: Naturphilosophie und Universalromantik* (Munich: Fink, 1973), 148–9; and Trevor Levere, *Poetry Realized in Nature: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Early Nineteenth-Century Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 164–5. Steffens's importance to Coleridge is analysed in detail by Raimonda Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 173–86. Born in Norway to a German father and Danish mother in 1773, Steffens studied natural science in Copenhagen and Kiel; became acquainted with Schelling and Goethe in Jena in 1798 (and dedicated the *Beyträge* to Goethe); and after further study at Freiberg under the geologist Abraham Gottlob Werner (who had also been Novalis's teacher), taught natural philosophy and mineralogy at Halle, Breslau, and lastly Berlin.

By this third and highest power he places himself on the same point as nature and contemplates all objects, himself included, in their permanent and universal beings and relations. Thus the astronomer places himself in the centre of the system and looks at all the planetary orbs as with the eye of the sun.[33]

The placement of man at the still point of the radiating universe is purely metaphorical, however, for his privileged view has nothing necessarily to do with observing celestial objects, as Coleridge revealed later in the lecture, when, departing ostentatiously from the usual English veneration of Newton, he offered a panegyric on Kepler: 'the famous Kepler … whom we all know as the beginning of truly scientific astronomy, of that science which possesses power and prophecy and which will for ever remain the cognitive monument of human greatness, because by laws demonstrably drawn out of his own mind he has, in that mind, not only [lit], but as far as his own purposes require it, controlled the mighty orbs of nature.'[34] Here too, as in Novalis, we encounter an epistemological formulation of the microcosm *in potentia*. The more fully we comprehend nature, the more fully we recognize its affinity with ourselves. That is why Coleridge, like the young Hegel in his Latin dissertation on the planetary orbits, rated 'the inventive, generative, constitutive mind' of Kepler above the 'patient and collective mind' of Newton: the latter was supposed merely to have elaborated mathematically what the former had already explained physically.[35] That the myopic Kepler could have devised an empirically verifiable explanation of planetary motion testified not only to his individual genius (though none of the

[33] Coleridge, *Lectures 1818–1819: On the History of Philosophy*, ed. J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), ii. 461 (the editor's emendations in brackets).

[34] Ibid. 465–8.

[35] Coleridge, *Table Talk*, ed. Carl Woodring (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), i. 211 (8 Oct. 1830); Hegel, *Dissertatio philosophica de orbitis planetarum* (1801), ed. Wolfgang Neuser (Weinheim: VCH, 1986), 82: 'after the fertile genius of our great Kepler [*maximi nostri Kepleri felix ingenium*] had discovered the laws by which the planets are moved around their orbits, Newton was cried up [*perhibetur*] for having demonstrated these same laws not physically but geometrically [*non physicis sed geometricis rationibus demonstravisse*].' In a similar, if more blatantly nationalistic, vein is Friedrich Hölderlin's panegyric 'Keppler' (1789), in *Sämtliche Werke: Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, ed. Friedrich Beissner and Adolf Beck (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1943–85), i. 81–2.

Romantics denied that), but more crucially to the harmony between human reason and the order of nature.

The curious verb *controlled* indicates what was at stake for Coleridge in his conception of the microcosmic man: the recuperation of nature in a meaningful relation to humanity. But he was no longer content, as Diderot and Kant had been, to renounce noumenal truth for the sake of phenomenal knowledge, objective significance for the sake of subjective purposiveness. Like Bovillus, Coleridge and the German *Naturphilosophen* presented the cognitive relation of microcosm to macrocosm as an ontological relation because they believed that knowledge of nature had to be guaranteed finally by participation in the absolute, lest the world itself be, as in Schiller's parodic summary of J. G. Fichte's first lectures at Jena, 'merely a ball that the I [*das Ich*] has thrown and catches again in reflection'.[36] But it does not follow from that belief, any more than from the rejection of mechanistic materialism, that Romantic *Naturphilosophie* was 'a throwback to earlier, prescientific modes of thought', as in a naive reaffirmation of the medieval microcosmic tradition.[37] Just as there is no genuine 'return to nature', since whatever one might imagine returning to will always have changed from what one left behind, so there is no genuine repetition of the past in intellectual history.

Naturphilosophie was founded on two postulates, one contradicting dualism and the other contradicting mechanism. First, the absolute and the universe are one and the same, consisting in a single, self-sufficient, infinite substance of which all finite things are attributes or modifications and in which all oppositions are dissolved. Second, this substance in its totality is an organism, developing continuously in a unified, teleological process that proceeds from the inorganic through the organic to human reason. The first postulate was derived from Spinozan monism, the second from late-Enlightenment vitalism. Because Spinoza himself, for whom mind and body were distinct and non-interacting attributes of the same substance, would have

rejected a vitalist reinterpretation of monism, Robert Pippin con-
cludes that the attempted realization of just such a reinterpretation in
Naturphilosophie is philosophically implausible.[38] That the endeavour
was no less compelling to the early Romantics for all its implausibility
to Pippin (and not only to him, of course) remains unexplained on
his terms, and perhaps not worth trying to explain. Thus he implicitly
dissociates *Naturphilosophie* from philosophy, recognizing—as did
Kant in his two-pronged attack on Spinozism and hylozoism—that to
do otherwise would be to invite unreason into reason's own dwelling.
If, however, it is conceded that philosophies are products of as well
as responses to historical circumstances, then the development of a
vitalist monism at the end of the eighteenth century need not remain
totally inexplicable. Indeed an historical account of this development
is the more valuable precisely in the absence of what Pippin would
consider 'an adequate philosophical account'.

Pippin acknowledges that Spinoza's monism might have recom-
mended itself to those disappointed with the 'limitations of Kant's
subjectivism, his inevitable skepticism, or his various dualisms'. But
since Spinoza's works were proscribed and not easily accessible in
the eighteenth century, while his reputation as a systematic atheist
was secure, it is unlikely that his philosophy would ever have been
regarded seriously as the basis of an alternative to Kant's had Friedrich
Heinrich Jacobi, a minor novelist and friend of Goethe, not decided in
1785 to publish a report of the conversations he had had with Lessing
five years earlier, seven months before the latter's death. For what
Jacobi revealed was that he had elicited from the playwright, by show-
ing him Goethe's unpublished ode 'Prometheus', in which the Titan
contemptuously dismisses Zeus as being unworthy of worship, not
only an expression of dissatisfaction with 'the orthodox concepts of
divinity' but an avowal of Spinozism: Ἐν και παν [One and all]! That's
all I know. There is no other philosophy than Spinoza's.'[39] Lessing's

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[38] Pippin, 'The Kantian Aftermath: Reaction and Revolution in Modern German Philosophy', in *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 27–53, at 37–8. Cf. Spinoza, *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*, bk. 2, props. 6 and 7 schol., and bk. 3, prop. 2 and schol., in *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhardt (1925; Heidelberg: Winter, 1972), ii. 89, 90, 141–4.

[39] Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, ed. Marion Lauschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 2000), 22–3. For the text of 'Prometheus'

status as an exemplar of Enlightenment ensured that this revelation of his radical unorthodoxy would generate a heated controversy, known as the *Pantheismusstreit*, in which Jacobi was even blamed for the death of Lessing's friend Moses Mendelssohn in 1786. Jacobi's primary concern, however, was with neither Lessing nor Spinoza but rather the philosophical position that both represented: rationalism, which he understood to assume the universal applicability of the principle of sufficient reason. If, according to that principle, every effect had an identifiable prior cause, then a consistent rationalism could only be deterministic and fatalistic, disallowing a self-caused God and the freedom of the will. Thus all philosophy, to the extent it was rationalistic, was equivalent to Spinozism, and Spinozism equivalent to atheism. That being the case, it was impossible to accommodate rationalism to Christianity, as the dominant philosophical school of the German Enlightenment had sought to do: 'The Leibnizo-Wolffian philosophy is no less fatalistic than the Spinozistic, and it leads the diligent researcher back to the basic principles of the latter.'[40] Reason could offer no grounding for its demonstrations: this demanded an act of faith, which Jacobi called a 'mortal leap' (*salto mortale*). But he had difficulty persuading others to follow him in making this leap: Lessing for his part jokingly pleaded the stiffness of his aged legs.

In retrospect it can be said that the one thing Jacobi demonstrated conclusively was the law of unintended consequences. Hoping to warn his contemporaries of the dangers of rationalism, he succeeded instead in drawing their attention to the attractions of monism, attractions he merely compounded by adding to the second edition of the *Spinozabüchlein* in 1789 a generous extract from another

(composed in 1773), see *GA* i. 320–1. In this paragraph I draw on my article 'Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich, 1743–1819', in C. J. Murray (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760–1850* (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), i. 571–3. For more comprehensive accounts of the *Pantheismusstreit*, see Heinrich Scholz, intro. to *idem* (ed.), *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn* (1916; facs. repr. Waltrop: Spenner, 2004), pp. xi–cxxviii; Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), ch. 2; David Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*, ch. 4; and Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), chs. 2 and 3.

[40] Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 121.

pantheistic philosopher, Giordano Bruno, whose works at the time were even scarcer than Spinoza's. Among the readers of the book were the young Hölderlin and Schelling, for whom the phrase ἕν καὶ πᾶν [*hen kai pan*] became a kind of motto.

The former, after initially accepting Jacobi's presentation of faith in Christ as the only alternative to 'cold reason abandoned by the heart', moved towards his own accommodation of Spinoza.[41] By December 1795, when he declared in the preface to the penultimate version of his novel *Hyperion* that 'we tear ourselves loose from the peaceful Εν και παν of the world in order to form it through ourselves [*um es herzustellen, durch uns Selbst*]', he was defining his poetic task as arriving at a consciousness of the traumatic but unavoidable loss, precisely through consciousness, of our primal unity with nature.[42] Among the factors influencing his abandonment of Jacobi's *salto mortale*, Frederick Beiser conjectures plausibly, were three tenets of Jacobi's own philosophical position: (1) that the philosopher's task is ultimately 'to disclose being' (*Dasein zu enthüllen*), that is, to reveal that which, in its immediacy and simplicity, transcends discursiveness; (2) that, *pace* Kant, the reality of things outside our mind is given to us directly in perception; and (3) that what Spinoza considered the unique, universal substance is simply being itself.[43] With the means provided by Jacobi, then, Hölderlin was able to reject both Jacobi's anti-rationalist realism and, more importantly, Fichte's transcendental idealism. Combining Spinoza's universal substance, as interpreted by Jacobi, with Fichte's 'absolute I', Hölderlin postulated absolute being as the union of subject and object: 'Where subject and object are united absolutely, not merely in part, and therefore united in such a way that no division can be performed without violating the essence of what is to be divided, there and nowhere else can one speak simply of being, as is the case in intellectual

[41] Hölderlin to his mother, 14 Feb. 1791, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vi. 63–4. For his notes on Jacobi's book, written most likely in 1791 and referring to the first edition, see *Sämtliche Werke*, iv. 207–10.

[42] *Sämtliche Werke*, iii. 235–7, at 236.

[43] Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 384–6. Cf. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 35, 45, 164 (preface to the 2nd edn.): 'I proceed … from the third person, not from the first, and believe that one ought on no account to put the *sum* behind the *cogito*.'

intuition.'[44] By 'intellectual intuition'—a term he appropriated from Fichte, whose own definition of it is quoted in Chapter 5—he meant a non-discursive experience that could only be aesthetic. What exactly Hölderlin thought that experience to consist in is disputed, but in an essay of *c*.1800 he identified it with the tragic as the anticipation or the recollection, as opposed to the direct apprehension, of being.[45] He thereby spared himself the need of a symbolist theory like Schelling's, the purpose of which was to account for the aesthetic *objectification* of being in its primordial state.

From the beginning of his own career, Schelling accepted Jacobi's demand that philosophy disclose being in the sense of the unconditioned (*das Unbedingte*) or absolute. But while recognizing that Kant permitted no response to that challenge, he was wary of Spinoza, whose determinism and mechanism seemed to him incompatible with individual freedom. Thus when Schelling declared himself a Spinozist, in a letter of 1795 to Hegel, it was by way of offering something like the 'subjectivist Spinozism' that Schiller, in the letter to Goethe quoted above, had attributed to Fichte: a monism in which the universal substance was replaced by the absolute I.[46] The

[44] Hölderlin, 'Urtheil und Sein' (*c*.1795), in *Sämtliche Werke*, iv. 216–17: 'Wo Subject und Object schlechthin, nicht nur zum Theil vereinigt ist, mithin so vereinigt, daß gar keine Theilung vorgenommen werden kan, ohne das Wesen desjenigen, was getremmt werden soll, zu verlezen, da und sonst nirgends kann von einem Seyn schlechthin die Rede seyn, wie es bei der intellectualen Anschauung der Fall ist.'

[45] 'Über den Unterschied der Dichtarten', in *Sämtliche Werke*, iv. 266–72, at 267–8. The arguments of Ernst Cassirer ('Hölderlin und der deutsche Idealismus', in *Idee und Gestalt: Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, Kleist* (Berlin: Cassirer, 1924), 113–55, at 123) and Beiser (*German Idealism*, 391–7) that Hölderlin allowed for the direct intuition of being seem to me more speculative and less convincing than the opposing arguments advanced by Thomas Pfau ('Critical Introduction' to *Friedrich Hölderlin: Essays and Letters on Theory*, ed. and trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 1–29, at 25–7) and Xavier Tilliette (*L'Intuition intellectuelle de Kant à Hegel* (Paris: Vrin, 1995), ch. 4).

[46] Schelling to Hegel, 4 Feb. 1795, in *Aus Schellings Leben: In Briefen*, ed. G. L. Plitt (Leipzig, 1869–71), i. 74–7, at 76: 'For me too'—a reference to Lessing's confession to Jacobi—'the orthodox concepts of God are no more. My answer is, we reach *further* than to a personal being [*zum persönlichen Wesen*]. I have in the meantime become a Spinozist. Don't be amazed. You'll soon hear how. To Spinoza the world (the object per se in opposition to the subject) is—*all* [*All*], to me the I is.' Cf. *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen* (1795), *SW* i. 149–244, esp. 151–60, 171–2, 184–5, 192–3, 206–8. Dieter Henrich has reconstructed Schelling's earliest reception of Spinoza through Jacobi: see

awkwardness of this replacement betrayed itself immediately in *On the I as the Principle of Philosophy*, where Schelling did not refrain from designating the absolute 'the single substance'; but only after an intensive engagement with the natural sciences—which included attending lectures on physics and chemistry at Leipzig, reading scientific and medical publications, and even (in May 1798) conducting optical experiments with Goethe—did he finally conclude that the absolute could not be considered a subject in any sense. In the first product of this new engagement, the *Ideas for the Philosophy of Nature* (1797), the first part of which surveyed recent research on such phenomena as combustion, electricity, and magnetism, Schelling still sought to account transcendentally for the mind's sense of its unity with nature: the 'symbolic language' in which such a unity was expressed phenomenally had to be a product of the 'creative imagination' (*schöpferische Einbildungskraft*) because nature itself was but the realization of 'the laws of our mind'. The two previous systematic attempts to explain the relation of nature to consciousness, Spinoza's and Leibniz's, were equally flawed, the former because it allowed no transition from the infinite to the finite, the latter because it allowed no immanent connection between the individual monads and the universe as a whole.[47] But within two years Schelling was prepared to accept 'the Spinozism of physics', as he labelled *Naturphilosophie* on account of its positing nature as the absolute.[48] The reason for this reversal was not that he had abandoned his objections to Spinoza's static monism, but that, rather like Herder a decade earlier, he had begun to conceive a dynamic alternative to it. To assume that nature as a whole was nothing more than a mechanical system of which we, as organic and free beings, were nonetheless parts or attributes presented an intolerable contradiction between

'Philosophisch–theologische Problemlagen im Tübinger Stift zur Studienzeit Hegels, Hölderlins und Schellings', in *Konstellationen: Probleme und Debatte am Ursprung der idealistischen Philosophie (1789–1795)* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991), 171–213, at 205–13.

[47] Schelling, *Ideen zur einer Philosophie der Natur, SW* ii. 1–343, at 35–9, 47, 55–6. Cf. Joan Steigerwald, 'Epistemologies of Rupture: The Problem of Nature in Schelling's Philosophy', *Studies in Romanticism*, 41 (2002), 545–84, at 551.

[48] *Einleitung zu dem Entwurf eines System der Naturphilosophie* (1799), §2, *SW* iii. 273.

mechanism and organicism, between necessity and freedom. Were nature itself assumed to be an organism, however, the contradiction would disappear.

After his own turn to *Naturphilosophie*, Schelling predicted that future ages would trace 'the epoch of an entirely new natural science' to the lecture of 11 February 1793 in which the zoologist Carl Friedrich Kielmeyer deduced from five basic organic forces a single primal force operating at every level of organization throughout nature, from the most generalized to the most individualized, from the inorganic to humanity.[49] In fact, however, Kielmeyer's speculative deduction represented the culmination of the transition in eighteenth-century science from quantification and classification to a focus on developmental processes. Like the nascent human sciences, the natural sciences in the latter half of the century, and particularly the life sciences, sought to explain individuation and diversity by reference to postulated primal states (Bonnet's *germes*, containing preformed all the parts of the first and of all subsequent individuals that would develop from them), archetypal forms (Diderot's *prototype de tous les êtres*), or—the most significant legacy of Leibniz's vitalist monadology—immanent developmental forces (Blumenbach's *Bildungstrieb*, generating all organisms out of undifferentiated matter).[50] Proceeding

[49] Schelling, *Von der Weltseele, eine Hypothese der höheren Physik zur Erklärung des allgemeinen Organismus, SW* ii. 345–583, at 565; cf. Kielmeyer, 'Rede über die Verhältnisse der organischen Kräfte unter einander in der Reihe der verschiedenen Organisationen, die Geseze und Folgen dieser Verhältnisse', *Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin*, 23 (1930), 247–67, esp. 264. On the theoretical and historical importance of Kielmeyer's lecture, see Timothy Lenoir, 'The Göttingen School and the Development of Transcendental Naturphilosophie in the Romantic Era', *Studies in the History of Biology*, 5 (1981), 111–205, at 164–70; and Robert Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 238–46 (the latter a corrective to the former's Kantian bias). Manfred Durner, Francesco Moiso, and Jörg Jantzen survey contemporary theories of chemistry, magnetism, electricity, galvanism, and physiology in their weighty supplementary volume to the ongoing historico-critical edition of Schelling's *Werke: Wissenschaftshistorischer Bericht zu Schellings naturphilosophischen Schriften 1797–1800* (Stuttgart: Frommann–Holzboog, 1994). Also useful, and less forbiddingly comprehensive, is the collection of essays edited by Andrew Cunningham and Nicholas Jardine, *Romanticism and the Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
[50] See Charles Bonnet, *Considérations sur les corps organisés* (1762), *Contemplation de la nature* (1764), and *Palingénésie philosophique* (1769); Diderot, *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature* (1754), §12; and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *Über den*

from a notion similar to Blumenbach's of an immanent organizing force (*Kraft*), Herder offered in his *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity* (1784–91) a comprehensive theory of organic development which asserted as 'anatomically and physiologically true, that through the entire animated creation of our earth the analogy of *one organization* prevails' and finds its perfection in man. Even Kant, despite his granting teleology merely a regulative (as opposed to constitutive) status, contributed significantly to the formation of *Naturphilosophie* by defining organisms as self-organized ends in themselves and by explaining matter as the interaction of opposing forces.[51] Applied to nature as a totality, in *Naturphilosophie* itself, the concept of the organism was to serve as the basis for organizing experimental science and interpreting its results. For if all individual phenomena emerge from and are aspects of the whole, Schelling emphasized in a lecture 'On Natural Science in General', then they can be comprehended fully only in relation to that whole, the absolute, which is known deductively, hence 'only through philosophy'.[52]

Bildungstrieb und das Zeugungsgeschäfte (1781). On the scientific contexts of these developmental theories, see Jacques Roger, *Les Sciences de la vie dans la pensée française du XVIIIe siècle: La génération des animaux de Descartes à l'Encyclopédie* (Paris: Colin, 1963); Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogony and Phylogeny* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), ch. 2; and Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, 207–29. For an overview of eighteenth-century organicist theories of human culture—in particular, those in Herder's 'Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache' (1772), Lessing's *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (1780), and Johann Christoph Adelung's *Versuch einer Geschichte der Culture des menschlichen Geschlechts* (1782)—see Karl Fink, 'Ontology Recapitulates Phyology: A Classic Formula of Organicism', in Frederick Burwick (ed.), *Approaches to Organic Form* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1991), 87–112.

[51] Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte des Menschheit*, 1. 2. 4, in *Werke in zehn Bänden,* vi. 72–6, at 76; Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, §65, and *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* (1786), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, iv. 467–565. The 'dialectical struggle' between Kant and the *Naturphilosophen* is elucidated by Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, ch. 9. A further development of the dynamic microcosm along Herderian lines would occur in Lorenz Oken's claim that because higher animals pass through the same developmental stages as lower animals before passing beyond them, man, as the highest animal, represents the entire animal kingdom, while it in its totality in turn represents him (*Lehrbuch der Naturphilosophie*, §§3070, 3579, 3626, 3rd edn. (1843; facs. repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1991), 396, 512, 521). The first edition of the *Lehrbuch* appeared in 1809–11.

[52] Schelling, *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums* (1803), lect. 11, *SW* v. 317–26, at 323. Cf. Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, ed. Thomas McFarland

Thus while continuing to assume, as did Fichte, that the principle of subject–object identity was the foundation of knowledge, Schelling now sought to justify that assumption in a theory of nature that subsumed all differentiation under the concept of a self-caused, self-directed, hierarchically self-organizing whole. In *On the World-Soul* (1798), the first publication in which he signalled unmistakably a move from subjectivism to naturalism, thereby winning Goethe's favour, Schelling resorted to the microcosm–macrocosmic analogy to explain the connection (*Copula*) between the absolute and the individual in organic life: 'Wherever this higher copula affirms itself in the particular, there is the microcosm, organism, the completed representation of the universal life of the substance in a particular life [*vollendete Darstellung des allgemeinen Lebens der Substanz in einem besonderen Leben*].' That is, the individual organism fully represents within itself the whole of which it is a part. And because, Schelling went on to argue in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), minds and bodies alike—'all thinking things, all objects of all thought', in Wordsworth's apposite phrase—participate in the universal life, they should correspond perfectly to each other in the act of knowledge. Disruption of the 'identity between intelligence and the organism' therefore constitutes sickness; its cessation, death. But when that identity is fully healthy, so to speak, it is represented in organisms themselves: 'every plant is a symbol of intelligence'.[53]

So the symbol was supposed to be the empirical confirmation of the unity of extension and thought, of the real and the ideal. The

and Nicholas Halmi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 218 (fragment of *c*.1822–3): 'the philosophy of nature can remain philosophy only by rising above nature'.

[53] *Von der Weltseele, SW*, ii. 374; *System des transcendentalen Idealismus, SW* iii. 327–634, at 498–9 and 490. Steffens would later recount in his autobiography that the decisive event in his intellectual development was encountering Schelling's teachings on *Naturphilosophie* in 1798 (*Was ich erlebte: Aus der Erinnerungen niedergeschrieben* (Breslau, 1840–4), iii. 338; iv. 2, 75–6, 83, 86). Complementary overviews of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, both emphasizing its naturalism and receptiveness to empirical science, are offered by Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, ch. 3; and Beiser, *German Idealism*, 506–28. On biological study at Jena, where Schelling taught from 1798 to 1803, see Ilse Jahn, 'On the Origin of Romantic Biology and Its Further Development at the University of Jena between 1790 and 1850', in Stefano Poggi and Maurizio Bossi (eds.), *Romanticism in Science: Science in Europe, 1790–1840* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 75–89.

provision for such confirmation should have been superfluous, not to say absurd, since the principal goal of Schelling's philosophy was precisely to establish the rational necessity that every organism represent synecdochally the universal organism, and every act of knowledge the primal knowledge, or intellectual intuition, whereby the mind recognizes its oneness with its object. But obviously Schelling hoped that that unity, which by definition was not knowable empirically, might nonetheless be realized in the sensible world, just as Kant hoped that the supersensible laws of morality might be. Because the symbol was supposed to perform its objectifying function 'tautegorically', without permitting being and meaning to be distinguished, it had to be devoid of intention or purpose: 'If any intention can be glimpsed in its meaningfulness [*das Sinnvolle*], the object itself is annihilated for us.' Art, therefore, could be symbolic only to the extent that, as the objectified identity of unconsciousness and consciousness, that is, of the *terminus ad quo* and *terminus ad quem* of organic development, it retained an unconscious aspect. (That 'unconscious infiniteness' was also said to give art its 'inscrutable depth', which no finite understanding, including the artist's own, was capable of elucidating.)[54] But even in his lectures on the philosophy of art, delivered in Jena in 1802–3 and repeated in Würzburg in 1803–4, as well as in his *System of the Complete Philosophy* of 1804, Schelling identified the symbol primarily with nature, an unconscious production, and with ancient mythology, a collective production of untraceable origin. Hence his ambivalence, to be examined in Chapter 5, about whether the formation of a 'new mythology' or universal symbolism—which is to say, of a new culture of the sign—could be considered an artistic project at all. Without *Naturphilosophie*, in any event, there could be no new mythology. Indeed the concept of the symbol was itself but the concept of the organism redefined aesthetically and semiotically: self-sufficiency became self-referentiality and non-discursiveness; the unity of part and whole, the identity of particularity and universality. That Schelling first analysed the concept of the symbol as such

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[54] Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, §39, *SW* v. 412; *System des transcendentalen Idealismus, SW* iii. 619–20. Cf. Gian Franco Frigo, 'Das Kunstwerk als Organismus: Natur und Kunst bei Schelling', in Birgit Tappert and Willi Jung (eds.), *Heitere Mimesis: Festschrift für Willi Hirdt zum 65. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: Francke, 2003), 627–36.

in his lectures on matters of aesthetics attests less to the extension of 'the categories of his *Naturphilosophie* into the theory of art', as Sørensen proposes, than to the incorporation of aesthetics into his *Naturphilosophie* as a solution to the elusiveness of intellectual intuition.[55]

In November 1803, after Schelling had completed his first course of lectures on the philosophy of art, Goethe asked him to explain the difference between symbol and allegory to the painter Johann Martin Wagner.[56] The poet could entrust this task—elaborating a distinction he himself had been the first to make—to the philosopher because they agreed that the symbol was distinguished by its inherence in nature, its ontological identity with its meaning, its intuitability, and its non-discursiveness. Their agreement is hardly surprising, for Goethe was, if not the only begetter of, then at least an indispensable contributor to the organicist monism that underlay Schelling's claims for the symbol. Just as in Rome in 1786–7 he had assisted Moritz in articulating an aesthetic theory, so in Jena a dozen years later he assisted Schelling in articulating a philosophy of nature. The assistance was both direct and indirect: the former consisted in the botanic and morphological studies that had led Goethe himself to the concept of the synecdochical symbol, the latter in his unwitting role in the *Pantheismusstreit*.

Kant's third *Critique*, which Goethe read upon its publication in 1790, may have provided him the negative stimulus to specify, as he did in a document of 1805, four types of symbols, all intrinsically related to their meaning and three identical with their meaning in some respect: physically (as in magnetic phenomena), aesthetically and ideally (as in 'all good similes [*Gleichnisse*]'), or 'in the highest sense' (as in symbols 'derived from mathematics and … likewise founded on sensible intuitions [*Anschauungen*]').[57] The rejection of analogically for ontologically based symbolism followed from his conception of

[55] Cf. Sørensen, *Symbol und Symbolismus*, 251.
[56] Goethe to Schelling, 29 Nov. 1803, in *Aus Schellings Leben*, ii. 6–8, at 8.
[57] Goethe, 'Symbolik', *GA* xvi. 855–6. C. G. Körner reported Goethe's reading of Kant to Schiller on 1 Oct. 1790 (*GA* xxii. 188–9). Goethe's own account, in 'Einwirkung der neuern Philosophie' (1817), emphasized his attraction to Kant's analogy between art and nature: 'Here I saw my most disparate concerns juxtaposed, artistic and

nature as a living unity whose inherent tendency towards complexity was governed by law, the principle of development, and form, the pattern of development. As early as 1786, after having identified the intermaxillary bone in humans by analogy to that in other vertebrates, Goethe had postulated the ontogenetic and phylogenetic derivation of plants from a primordial plant (*Urpflanze*); and by 1790, after having recognized in Italy that no given plant corresponded to the *Urpflanze*, he had undertaken, in a short treatise that was to persuade Schelling of the 'intrinsic identity of all organisms [*Organisationen*] with each other and with the earth', to explain plant development as the successive modification, by the forces of either expansion or contraction, of a single primordial organ—a transcendental organ—which for the sake of convenience he designated the 'leaf form' (*Blattgestalt*).[58] Stimulated by the examinination of an ovine skull on the Venetian Lido in April 1790, Goethe had then sought to formulate a corresponding theory of animal development from an archetypal vertebra; but this endeavour, periodically renewed through the 1790s, had remained inconclusive, in part because of his difficulty in resolving the conflicting claims of empiricism and idealism on the concept of the archetype (*Urbild* or *Typus*).[59] A hint of his frustration may be

natural products treated alike; aesthetic and teleological judgement illuminated one another reciprocally' (*GA* xvi. 873–7, at 875).

[58] Goethe, 'Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen' (1790), *GA* xvii. 22–62; cf. Schelling to Goethe, 26 Jan. 1801, in Schelling, *Briefe und Dokumente*, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Bonn: Bouvier, 1962–75), i. 240–4, at 243 (a letter acknowledging how 'valuable' he found the treatise, which indeed he had cited in the *Weltseele, SW* ii. 533, and *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* (1799), *SW* iii. 1–268, at 172). Goethe's refinement of the concept of the *Urpflanze* in 1786–7 is recounted in the *Italienische Reise, GA* xi. 65, 353, 413–14, and his diaries include repeated references to reading Schelling's latest works and discussing *Naturphilosophie* with him in person, e.g. 28–30 May, 7–8 June, 12–13 and 16 Nov. 1798; 19 Jan., 2–5 May, and much of late Sept.–early Oct. 1799; and 22 Apr. and 16 Nov. 1800 (*Tagebücher: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Jochen Golz et al. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1998–), vol. ii; and cf. Schelling to F. A. Carus, 9 Nov. 1799, in *Briefe und Dokumente*, i. 176–7). On the *os intermaxillare* (the apparent absence of which Blumenbach, for one, had considered a mark of human distinctiveness), see 'Über den Zwischenkiefer des Menschen und der Thiere' (composed and circulated privately in 1784, but not published till 1820), *GA* xvii. 288–328. Goethe's 'discovery' of the bone is examined in its scientific context by Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, 367–76.

[59] See H. B. Nisbet, *Goethe and the Scientific Tradition* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 1972), 23–41; and Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, 440–57.

detected in a poem he wrote in 1798, partly in response to Schelling's *Weltseele*:

> Alle Gestalten sind ähnlich, und keine gleichet der andern;
> Und so deutet der Chor auf ein geheimnes Gesetz,
> Auf ein heiliges Rätsel. O könnt ich dir, liebliche Freundin,
> Überliefern sogleich glücklich das lösende Wort![60]
>
> (Every form is similar, and none just like the other;
> Thus the chorus points to a mysterious law,
> To a sacred riddle. O would I were able, dear beloved,
> Simply to whisper the password to you.)

The solution, at least to the question of the epistemological status of archetypal forms, manifested itself after 1798—the year in which Goethe first distinguished symbol and allegory and first met Schelling—in what might be called the final metamorphosis of the concept of the *Urpflanze*: the archetypal phenomenon, a concept expounded primarily in the context of his optical researches. As defined in the didactic section of Goethe's *Theory of Colours* (published in 1810 after a gestation of nearly two decades), the *Urphänomen*, such as the appearance of colour through a turbid medium or magnetic attraction, is neither ideal nor real but both, at once representative and individual, the empirical instantiation of an idea. And to that extent, as an undated scientific aphorism collected in the *Maxims and Reflections* made explicit, it is symbolic:

Archetypal phenomenon:

> ideal as the ultimate knowable [*das letzte Erkennbare*],
> real as the known [*erkennt*],
> symbolic, because it encompasses all instances,
> identical with all instances.[61]

Goethe himself, in conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann on 18 February 1829, described the characteristic response to the recognition of an *Urphänomen* as 'astonishment', an affect that still

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[60] Goethe, 'Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen', ll. 5–8, *GA* i. 203–6, at 204.
[61] *Farbenlehre*, pt. 2, §175 and pt. 5, §741, *GA* xvi. 68–9, 200; *Maximen und Reflexionen*, no. 1369, *GA* ix. 672 (also xvii. 692–3). Cf. Nisbet, *Goethe and the Scientific Tradition*, 39–44.

at that date would have been associated more readily with the experience of the sublime. But whereas the sublime presupposed a subject–object dualism, the *Urphänomen* presupposed the opposite, a monism guaranteeing the correspondence between (to quote another of the *Maximen*) 'the unknown order in the subject' and that in the object.[62] Perhaps encouraged precisely by his contact with Schelling from 1798 to 1803, Goethe reaffirmed implicitly through the concept of the *Urphänomen*, and by extension of the symbol, what he had once affirmed explicitly to Jacobi, his attraction to the possibility of an intuitive knowledge founded on an ontological monism:

When you say on p. 101 [of the first edition of the *Spinozabüchlein*] that one can only believe in God, I say to you, I place a lot of value on looking [*halte viel aufs schauen*], and when Spinoza speaks of 'Scientia intuitiva' and says, 'Hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ad adequata idea essentiae formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adaequatam cognitionem essentiae rerum,' these few words give me courage to devote my entire life to observing things [*die Betrachtung der Dinge*] that I can hope to understand and of whose 'essentia formali' I can hope to form an adequate idea.[63]

Goethe must have hoped that the archetypal phenomenon would prove itself an adequate idea.

Referring decades later to the *Pantheismusstreit*, he assigned the central role in its instigation to his own 'Prometheus', which he omitted to mention had been first published without his permission, and to his annoyance, by Jacobi. By prompting Lessing to express himself 'on important points of thought and feeling', the ode had 'served as the priming powder [*Zündkraut*] for an explosion which exposed the most secret relations of worthy men … relations that, unknown to those men themselves, slumbered in an otherwise highly enlightened society'.[64] In this account, Jacobi's role was reduced to

[62] *Gespräche mit Eckermann, GA* xxiv. 319; *Maximen und Reflexionen*, no. 1344, *GA* ix. 669: 'Es ist etwas unbekanntes Gesetzliches im Objekt, welches dem unbekannten Gesetzlichen im Subjekt entspricht.'

[63] Goethe to Jacobi, 5 May 1786, *GA* xviii. 923–5, at 924. The quotation is from Spinoza's *Ethica*, pt. 2, prop. 40, schol. 2: 'This kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things.'

[64] Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811–33), 3. 15, *GA* x. 699.

having been the passive recipient of Lessing's confession, though by Jacobi's own report it was he, not his interlocutor, who had introduced Spinoza's name into the conversation. Why Goethe was willing retrospectively to claim responsibility for the subsequent controversy, which might never have occurred had Jacobi kept the conversation private, is evident from the preceding and succeeding chapters of *Poetry and Truth*, where the poet reveals himself to have been another of the Dutch philosopher's secret admirers. In chapter 14 Goethe credited Spinoza, whose temperament he contrasted to his own, with calming his emotions and opening his eyes to 'a broad and free view over the sensible [*sinnliche*] and moral world'.[65] To be sure, Goethe had read desultorily in Spinoza as early as 1773, but only after discussions with Jacobi in September 1784 did he read the *Ethics* with some care and discover how congenial its monism was to his own way of thought. Writing to his friend in October 1785, Goethe excused his muted response to the *Spinozabüchlein* by recalling his admiration for the philosopher: 'You know that I'm not of your opinion about the matter. That to me Spinozism and atheism are two different things. That ... although I don't share his conception of nature itself [*ohne seine Vorstellungsart der Natur selbst zu haben*], yet if I were to specify one book ... that agreed most closely with my conception, I would have to name the *Ethics*.'[66]

For his part, Jacobi, having opened the age's philosophical Pandora's box, would spend much of his remaining years trying vainly to reclose it, caustically denouncing first Fichte and later Schelling for proffering nothing more than disguised forms of Spinozism. The latter polemic cost him his long, if always difficult, friendship with Goethe. But if Jacobi had not existed, his contemporaries would have had to invent him, for Spinoza's infamy even at the end of the eighteenth century, perhaps as much because of his liberalism and

[65] Ibid. 3. 14, *GA* x. 684. But perhaps Goethe was in a sense the true instigator of the *Pantheismusstreit*, for his public ridicule of Jacobi's novel *Woldemar* in 1779 (including nailing a copy of it to a tree) had encouraged Jacobi to abandon his literary career and devote himself more fully to philosophy, or more precisely to philosophical critique. Lessing's private praise of his earlier novel *Eduard Allwills Papiere* (not, as I stated in my encyclopedia article, of *Woldemar*) provided the pretext for Jacobi's visit to Wolfenbüttel.

[66] Goethe to Jacobi, 21 Oct. 1785, *GA* xviii. 880–1. For a careful, chronologically attentive survey of Goethe's reception of Spinoza, see Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*, ch. 6.

historicizing biblical criticism as because of his purported atheism, was such that no professed Spinozist could have advertised the philosophy of ἕν καὶ πᾶν more effectively than an outspoken critic. The appeal of that advertisement would prove irresistible, as we shall see, even to Jacobi's most sympathetic English reader, Coleridge.

4

Uses of Theology

Es war die Art zu allen Zeiten,
Durch Drei und Eins und Eins und Drei
Irrtum statt Wahrheit zu verbreiten.

Goethe, *Faust*, 1. 2560–2

From a historiographical perspective, a difficulty arises when the appearance of historical continuities against a background of discontinuities is attributed to the existence of certain historically constant substances: human nature, innate ideas, archetypes, the contents of the unconscious, and the like. The difficulty is not necessarily that such constants do not exist, but that their existence need not be assumed so long as other explanations of historical continuities are at least conceivable. Taking into account the social functions of concepts or conceptual systems as well as their contents enables us not only to identify more exactly the nature of the continuities among them, but to reveal kinds of continuities that are unknown to substantialist historiography, such as that in which an opposition in content conceals an identity in function. Nowhere does historical substantialism, by which I mean the uncritical assumption of conceptual identities across time, manifest its limitations more fully than in relating Romantic, and particularly Coleridgean, symbolist theory to Christian theology. Two kinds of substantialism are relevant here: first, a variant of *Toposforschung*, the study of literary topoi, in which the survival of authentically theological concepts is inferred from the use of recognizably theological language; and second, the secularization thesis advocated by M. H. Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971) and elsewhere.

The practice of *Toposforschung* is identified most closely with Ernst Robert Curtius, whose magnum opus *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1948) sought to reveal the unchanging basic elements of European literature. If Erich Rothacker was unkind in suggesting that that book's famous chapter surveying the metaphorics of the book from antiquity to modernity could have been written for the anniversary of a printing shop or a fountain pen factory, he was certainly justified in criticizing the work as 'an extreme example of … the history of words as opposed to the history of meanings and ideas'.[1] Because Curtius demonstrated the historical continuity of his chosen topoi and metaphors by isolating examples of them from their immediate contexts, he completely neglected, for example, the possible differences in meaning among them that a consideration of their contexts would reveal. Now a study whose purpose is to reveal historical constants cannot be criticized for fulfilling that purpose, but it can be criticized for doing so in a way that precludes further enquiry. Demonstrating a metaphor's durability does not require denying its adaptability, so long as one is prepared to distinguish between the metaphor itself and the uses to which it is put. Indeed only by recognizing its adaptability in the latter respect can one explain why it has been so durable in the former. *Toposforschung* is vitiated methodologically by its assumption of the inherent historical significance of linguistic parallels, for that assumption relieves it of the burden of interpreting, as opposed to merely cataloguing, such parallels. The reason for exposing this weakness here is that it is not confined to Curtius's work, but is present in scholarship that concerns us more directly.

Walter Benjamin maintained that the Romantic concept of the symbol had 'nothing beyond the name in common with the genuine [sc. theological] one', but the basis of his objection to the former was in fact that the Romantics had expropriated it from its proper context: 'The unity of the sensuous and supersensuous object, which is the paradox of the theological symbol, is distorted into a connection of appearance and essence.'[2] Had no more than the name had been in

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[1] Rothacker, *Das Buch der Natur*, ed. Wilhelm Perpeet (Bonn: Bouvier, 1979), 11. Cf. E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask (London: Routledge, 1953), ch. 16.

[2] Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972–89), i. 336.

question, Benjamin could hardly have called the Romantic symbol a 'usurper' (*Usurpator*). His political metaphor implies that the aesthetic concept must have displaced the theological one because the two concepts were too much alike to coexist peacefully. So it is by a reversal of direction along Benjamin's own line of argument that more recent critics, notably Thomas McFarland and the late J. Robert Barth, have sought to demonstrate the authentically theological nature of the Romantic concept.

To claim the concept for theology is to reclaim it from aesthetics, and in that respect the claim constitutes an assertion of custodial rights rather than an act of explanation. What the symbol gains by being subsumed under the category of the theological is not greater clarity but greater legitimacy, since its irrationality can now be dignified as a mystery of transcendent origin. Underlying this claim is the assumption that the institutional divisions between the fields of theology and literary criticism correspond to actual distinctions between the chosen objects of study of these fields, so that whatever concerns the theologian should not concern the literary critic or intellectual historian. Of course one might question whether critics who make this assumption thereby deny themselves the authority to pass judgement on the theological status of a concept, but a more important question is whether the appeal to transcendence is even necessary, as far as the historical legitimacy of the Romantic symbol is concerned. If the concept's irrational content can be explained rationally in terms of its social function, then it should not require the protective custody of a discipline in which inexplicable mysteries are accepted as a norm. But as we shall see, accepting the concept on the Romantics' terms rather than claiming it for a particular discipline entails the risk of discovering that it is not what it seems: that it is neither strictly aesthetic nor theological but *sui generis*.

The purported linguistic evidence of the Romantic concept's theological provenance consists in two words, *symbol* itself and *consubstantial*, the latter being peculiar to Coleridge, with whom this chapter will be primarily concerned. The German Romantics have little place in this chapter because, contrary to Hans-Georg Gadamer's supposition, it is implausible that they relied on 'early Protestant usage', meaning the use of the term *symbol* in sacramental theology,

in defining their own concept.[3] Reformation iconoclasts designated the sacraments symbolic in order to differentiate their communicative function from their ontological content and thereby minimize their role in the Church in favour of purely verbal acts: in so far as the Eucharist was *merely* symbolic, the material existence of the consecrated bread could have no bearing on the efficacy of Communion, which required a subjective understanding of its meaning.[4] Thus the Romantic project of re-enchanting the world—that is, of imagining the meaning of objects to inhere in their physical presence—was entirely antithetical to early Protestant doctrines of sacramental symbolism. Novalis, for one, recognized as much, and in his manifesto *Christendom or Europe* (written in 1799), which idealized the medieval Church, he lay responsibility for the disenchantment of the world at the Reformers' door: '[They] were restlessly occupied with purging nature, the earth, human souls, and the sciences of poetry—with wiping out every trace of the sacred, with tarnishing the memory of all elevating events and persons with sarcasm, with stripping the world of all its colourful decoration.'[5] A few years later Schelling, while conceding that the Reformation was 'historically necessary', regretted that its iconoclasm and literalism were destructive of 'symbolism and genuine

[3] Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, in *Gesammelte Werke* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986–95), i. 82.

[4] Yngve Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice: Evangelical and Catholic*, trans. A. G. Hebert (1930; London: SPCK, 1956), 103–10, 153–79; Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (London: Reaktion, 2004), 148–52, 310–11. Unlike other Reformers, such as Zwingli and Andreas Karlstadt, Luther insisted on the Real Presence: see Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. R. C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 373–403; and Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971–89), iv. 158–61, 189–203. Coleridge's response to Luther's Eucharistic doctrine is examined at the end of this chapter.

[5] Novalis, *Christenheit oder Europa* (1799), in *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe*, ed. Hans-Joachim Mähl and Richard Samuel (Munich: Hanser, 1978–82), ii. 729–50, at 741: 'Die Mitglieder waren rastlos beschäftig, die Natur, den Erdboden, die menschlichen Seele und die Wissenschaften von der Poesie zu säubern,—jede Spur des Heiligen zu vertilgen, das Andenken an alle erhebende Vorfälle und Menschen durch Sarkasmen zu verleiden, und die Welt alles bunten Schmucks zu entkleiden.' In their commentary the editors note a parallel passage in Friedrich Schleiermacher's *On Religion* (1799) which accuses the Reformers of having annihilated 'all that is art in nature and in the works of man' (*Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, ed. Hans-Joachim Rothert (Hamburg: Meiner, 1958), 83).

mythology'.[6] Now it may be true that the receptiveness of Herder, Goethe, and the German Romantics to pantheism and the idea of communion with nature betrays the influence of Lutheranism, and in particular of the Pietist movement, with its emphasis on personal experience of God; but influence is not equivalent to a conceptual identity, even a disguised one. *Pace* Frederick Beiser, the pantheism of the *Goethezeit* was not simply 'a reassertion of Luther's ideal of an immediate relationship with God', for 'Lutheranism without the Bible' is no Lutheranism at all.[7]

Schleiermacher had a point when he observed, in one of his aphorisms on hermeneutics, that 'Christianity created language. From the beginning it had, and still has, a genius for increasing the power of language.'[8] But in the case of the word *symbol*, it had little work to do. The Greek noun *sumbolon* was originally applied to a token—one half of a broken coin, for instance—which identified its possessor to the possessor of a matching token and established the right of the one to receive hospitality or payment from the other, and its introduction into the religious sphere to designate the means by which God reveals himself to the initiates, as well as the means by which the initiates identify themselves to one another, did not constitute a radical departure from its original meaning. The continuity between profane and religious *sumbola* consisted in their equal dependence upon the willingness of those who presented and beheld them to attribute their significance to a prior agreement or act of institution, whether a mutually hospitable relationship between two families, a commercial alliance between two cities, a covenant between God and mankind, or a metaphysical connection between the transcendent and the immanent. According to the second-century *Chaldean Oracles*, which Coleridge read in Thomas Stanley's *History of the Chaldaick Philosophy* (1662), the soul can escape its corporeal imprisonment and return to its divine source only because the transcendent paternal intellect

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[6] Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst* (1802–3), §42, *SW* v. 440–1.

[7] Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 61.

[8] Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle, 2nd edn. (Heidelberg: Winter, 1974), 38 (aphorism of 1805): 'Das Christenthum hat Sprache gemacht. Es ist ein potenzirender Sprachgeist von Anfang an gewesen und noch.'

($\pi\alpha\tau\rho\iota\kappa\grave{o}\varsigma$ $\nu o\hat{v}\varsigma$) [*patrikos nous*] has implanted symbols of itself in the soul.[9] According to the third-century Neoplatonist Iamblichus, we can recognize the symbols in which the gods manifest themselves to us only because there is an innate connection between the gods and the human mind.[10]

These examples are especially instructive because they demonstrate that religious applications of the term *symbol* were not confined to Christianity, and indeed that it did not first become a religious term when the early Christians adopted it. The Heidelberg classicist Friedrich Creuzer, whose massive study of symbolism and mythology Coleridge was reading by 1818 (and to which I shall return at the end of the next chapter), insisted that all of the senses in which the pagans used the word passed over to Christianity; but the matter can be stated more precisely than that.[11] What the Patristic theologians

[9] *Oracles chaldaïques* [*Oracula chaldaica*], frr. 108–9, ed. Édouard des Places (1971; Paris: Belles Lettres, 1989), 93–4; cf. Coleridge, *Notebooks*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge, 1957–2002), iii. 4424, 4446–7, and nn. In Stanley's *History of the Chaldaick Philosophy*, published as a separately paginated appendix to his *History of Philosophy*, 3rd edn. (London, 1701), the *Oracles* are arranged not as fragments but as consecutive verses: 'For the paternal Mind hath sowed Symbols thro' the World, | Which understandeth Intelligibles, and beautifieth ineffables' (= fr. 108); 'But the Paternal Mind accepts not her [sc. the soul's] Will, | Until she go out of Oblivion, and pronounce a | Word, Inserting the remembrance of the pure paternal Symbol' (= fr. 109).

[10] Iamblichus, *Les Mysteres d'Égypte* [*De mysteriis Aegyptorum*], 1. 3 (7. 13–16), ed. Édouard des Places (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1966), 41–2: 'An innate knowledge of the gods [$\dot{\eta}$ $\pi\epsilon\rho\grave{\iota}$ $\theta\epsilon\hat{\omega}\nu$ $\check{\epsilon}\mu\phi\upsilon\tau o\varsigma$ $\gamma\nu\hat{\omega}\sigma\iota\varsigma$] is bound up with our very being, and this knowledge is stronger than judgement and choice and prior to reasoning [$\lambda\acute{o}\gamma o\upsilon$] and proof.' Cf. also 2. 11 (97. 4–17), ibid. 96: 'The symbols [$\tau\grave{\alpha}$ $\sigma\upsilon\nu\theta\acute{\eta}\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$] accomplish their task by themselves, and the ineffable power of the gods, to which these symbols point, recognizes these kindred images [$\tau\grave{\alpha}\varsigma$ $o\grave{\iota}\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ $\epsilon\grave{\iota}\kappa\acute{o}\nu\alpha\varsigma$] without [having to be] aroused by our intellectual effort. ... The divine causes are not induced to action by our prior knowledge; rather this knowledge must already be present as a contributing cause [$\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\acute{\iota}\tau\iota\alpha$] to our soul's best tendencies and to our purity, and what properly rouses the divine will are the divine symbols themselves [$\alpha\grave{\upsilon}\tau\grave{\alpha}$ $\tau\grave{\alpha}$ $\theta\epsilon\hat{\iota}\acute{\alpha}$ ... $\sigma\upsilon\nu\theta\acute{\epsilon}\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$]' (translated after des Places). On the equivalence of the terms *sumbolon* and *sunthêma* in Neoplatonic usage, see Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, ed. Michel Tardieu, 2nd edn. (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1978), 192 n. 56, 470–1 and nn.; Peter Crome, *Symbol und Unzulänglichkeit der Sprache* (Munich: Fink, 1970), 49 n. 73; and Peter Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 218–24. Cf. also Coleridge, *Notebooks*, iv. 4831.

[11] Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker*, 2nd edn. (Darmstadt, 1819–21), i. 47–8 (pt. 1, §22). See also Struck, *Birth of the Symbol*, ch. 5.

called symbols were distinctively Christian in *content*, being conceived and interpreted in accordance with Christian doctrine, but identical in *function* with what various representatives of pagan religious thought had called symbols. By marking out those who belonged to the Church and were accordingly entitled to salvation, the Christian creeds and sacraments assumed the functions of two kinds of pagan *sumbola*: on the one hand of the passwords with which the initiates in the Mithraic and other mystery cults recognized each other, and on the other hand of the magical formulae with which the theurgists summoned the divine powers to reclaim the soul from the body.[12] The Eucharist, the only sacrament aside from baptism to which the Gospels refer, deserves special mention here because it reveals what distinguished the symbol from an ordinary image—and what gave it, in its original profane form, the potential for diverse additional applications. For although the administration of the Eucharist roughly imitates the act that instituted it, its significance derives not from a resemblance to what it represents but solely from its institution: the bread and wine are accepted as symbols of communion with Christ because he exhorted the Twelve to remember him by breaking bread and sharing wine.

The absence of a mimetic relation between signifier and signified also explains what made the *sumbolon* an especially suitable means of representing the transcendent, which resists being depicted in images or explained discursively. Because the symbol is understood to take the place of what it represents, substituting its own presence for the absence of something else, it can reveal the transcendent through the immanent without leading to an identification of the two. The pseudo-Dionysius, who flourished around 500, formulated the most historically influential defence of the symbol as a necessary accommodation to the human mind, which can approach the supersensible only by means of the sensible, but he was not the first to propose that God reveals himself symbolically in the words of scripture and the

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[12] On the theurgic *voces mysticae* see Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles*, 191–2, 437–40, 471–2; and Struck, *Birth of the Symbol*, 213–18. On the relation between the pagan mysteries and Christian sacraments specifically, see Hugo Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mysteries*, trans. Brian Battershaw (London: Burns & Oates, 1963), 3–45, 69–88.

works of nature.[13] That the Bible expresses sacred truths symbolically (*sumbolikôs*) to prevent them from being profaned was a fundamental exegetical principle of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, and the parallel between the biblical and pagan use of symbolism for this purpose was remarked both by Philo himself and later by the Alexandrian Christians who adopted his exegetical methods, such as Clement and Origen.[14] Interest in these pagan *sumbola*, especially those associated with the Pythagoreans, was in fact widespread in late antiquity, and quite a number of works attesting to this interest—mostly by pagan Neoplatonists—were known to Coleridge.[15] More tellingly, he attributed to Pythagoras the same concept of the symbol that he himself had announced a few years earlier in *The Statesman's Manual*, as if the difference between the contexts in which the concept was articulated were incidental: 'There exist in all things constituent and governing powers, the characters and efficiencies of which are represented to us by Numbers, as by symbolic Names, symbolic, namely, not allegorical or arbitrary, a Symbol being an essential Part of that, the whole of which it represents. This is the Pythag: Doctrine.'[16]

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[13] For the Dionysian theory of the symbol see *De caelesti hierarchia*, 1. 3. 121c–d, 124a; *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, 1. 2. 373b, 1. 5. 377a, 5. 2. 501d; *Epistolae*, 9. 1. 1105d–1108b. Cf. René Roques, *L'Univers dionysien: Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris: Aubier, 1954), 299–300: 'Le symbolisme sacramentel s'avère donc … comme un acte de condescendance divine qui met à notre niveau l'efficacité surnaturelle qui nous élève. … Cette condescendance ne veut pas cependent dissiper tout mystère. … Les symboles sont des moyens de suggérer la transcendance sans la circonscire.'

[14] Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit*, 12. 82; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, 5. 4. 21. 4; cf. 5. 4. 20. 3, 5. 5. 27–31, 5. 8. 45. 2, 5. 8. 46. 1, 5. 8. 55. 1, and 5. 9. 56. 2; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1. 7 and 7. 6. On Philo's biblical exegesis see Jean Pépin, 'La Théologie de l'exégèse allégorique chez Philon d'Alexandrie', in *La Tradition de l'allégorie de Philon de l'Alexandrie à Dante* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1987), 7–40; on Clement's theory of symbolism see Raoul Mortley, *Connaissance religieuse et herméneutique chez Clement d'Alexandrie* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 184–5, 188–207, 229–32.

[15] For the interest in Pythagorean symbols, see, e.g. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 10 (*Moralia*, 354–5); Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5. 5. 6. 24–9; Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica*, §§103–5, 161–2, 247; Porphyry, *Vita Pythagoriae*, §§10–11; Proclus, *In Alcibiadem*, 25. 6–10, *Theologia platonica*, 1. 4. For evidence of Coleridge's knowledge of most of these texts, see *Notebooks*, iii. 3276, 3802, 3924, 3935 and nn.; iv. 5075, 5081, 5232, 5296, 5439 and nn.

[16] Annotation on Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1798–1819) in Coleridge, *Marginalia*, ed. H. J. Jackson and George Whalley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980–2001), iv. 697–8; cf. *Lay Sermons*,

Coleridge would have known from his extensive reading in Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Sallustius, and Proclus, as well as in histories like Tennemann's, that in the Neoplatonists' conception of a hierarchically structured universe, sensible objects function as symbols of intelligible objects and intelligible objects in turn as symbols of the divine reality which lies beyond intelligibility (and beyond being itself). In the *Platonic Theology*, the *editio princeps* of which Coleridge was given in 1820, Proclus referred to the creation of what the pseudo-Dionysius would call dissimilar symbols: 'the demiurgic intellect allows the very first Forms [προτίστων εἰδῶν] within itself to be manifested in matter, and produces temporal images of eternal beings and divisible images of indivisible beings'.[17] So regardless of the extent to which the pseudo-Dionysius transformed the meaning of the terminology he appropriated from pagan Neoplatonists, his theory of the symbol still assumed the Neoplatonic logic of a graduated approach to transcendence, as explained by Plotinus: 'Just as he who wishes to behold the intelligible nature must contemplate what is beyond the sensible [ὁ τὴν νοητὴν φύσιν] without having any mental image of the sensible [οὐδεμίαν θαντασίαν αἰσθητοῦ ἔχων], so he who wishes to behold what is beyond the intelligible [τὸ ἐπέκεινα τοῦ νοητοῦ] must contemplate it by letting the intelligible go; he will learn *that* it is

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ed. R. J. White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 30 and 79. (With a few exceptions, Coleridge's marginalia on Tennemann cannot be dated more precisely than 1818–27.) Kathleen Coburn notes drily, 'Pythagoras must have been a very good Coleridgean' (Coleridge, *Philosophical Lectures*, ed. Coburn (London: Pilot Press, 1949), 106 n. 40).

[17] Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne* [*Theologia platonica*], 1. 29, ed. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1968–97), i. 124; cf. *Peri tês kath' Hellênas hieratikês technês* ['Περὶ τῆς καθ' ''Ελληνας ἱερατικῆς τέχνης'] 'On the Hieratic Art of the Greeks'], in Joseph Bidez et al. (eds.), *Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques grecs* (Brussels: Lamertin, 1924–32), vi. 139–51, esp. 148: 'the priests [ἱερατικοὶ], proceeding from the sympathy [συμπαθείας] that binds all phenomena to each other and to the invisible powers [πρὸς τὰς ἀφανεῖς δυνάμις], comprehended everything in everything [πάντα ἐν πᾶσι] and organized the science of sacred matters [τὴν ἐπιστήμην τὴν ἱερατικὴν]. They wondered to see … heavenly things [τὰ οὐράνια] on earth in a terrestrial form [γηίνως].' See further Hugo Koch, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen* (Mainz, 1900), 198–224; and Crome, *Symbol und Unzulänglichkeit*, 159–96. For J. H. Green's gift of the *In Platonis theologiam*, ed. Aemelius Portus (Hamburg, 1618), see Coleridge, *Notebooks*, iv. 4744 and n.

[ὅτι μὲν ἔστι] by means of the intelligible, but *in what way* [οἷον δ' ἐστὶ] it is by letting the intelligible go.'[18]

What can be concluded from this brief investigation of the term *sumbolon*? First, because there are already linguistic and functional identities between the Christian and non-Christian concepts of the symbol, the existence of such identities between the Christian and Romantic concepts of the symbol does not prove that the latter is *essentially* Christian. Second, because Coleridge was familiar with these non-Christian concepts, to the extent of explaining one of them as if it were his own, his symbolist theory need not have been indebted even slightly, let alone exclusively, to the Church Fathers. Even when, in his notes on Creuzer, Coleridge posited Christian theology as the *terminus ad quem* in the history of the word *symbol*, calling 'the consecrated Bread and Wine' its 'culminant' sense, he was less concerned with the Eucharist itself than with the significance of the fact that the Fathers had chosen to call it a *sumbolon*. Precisely the word's pagan history would originally have given it its dignity and recommended it to the Fathers as a means of emphasizing the sacred mystery of the Eucharist, a mystery that for Coleridge (for reasons to be considered presently) defied dogmatic explanation: 'For neither to the notion of bonâ fide Transsubstantiation, nor to that of the Signum merè significans, could the Term, Symbol, have been attached without a gross ignorance of its specific religious import, with which we have no right to charge the Fathers and Councils of the first five or six Centuries.'[19]

It is somewhat surprising that Coleridge did not devote more attention to the pseudo-Dionysius, from whose discussion of the Eucharist Creuzer had quoted passages. This inattention might have

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[18] *Enneads*, 5. 5. 6. 17–21, in *Plotins Schriften*, ed. Richard Harder, Rudolf Beutler, and Willy Theiler, 2nd edn. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1956–71), iii/a. 84. On the controversial question of the pseudo-Dionysius's relation to Neoplatonism, see Koch, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*, *passim*; Roques, *L'Univers dionysien*, 68–81; Endre von Ivánka, *Plato Christianus* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1964), 254–89; Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 20–3, 152–81, 218–29, 261–8; and H. D. Saffrey, 'New Objective Links between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus', in Dominic O'Meara (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1982), 64–74.

[19] Coleridge, *Notebooks*, iv. 4831; cf. Creuzer, *Symbolik*, i. 47 and n. (pt. 1, §22).

been due to the inaccessibility of his works—although there were sixteen editions of the *opera omnia* in Greek between 1516 and 1755—or to the unfavourable impression that Coleridge had already formed of him from reading his ninth-century disciple and translator, Joannes Scotus Eriugena.[20] But apart from Coleridge's relative unfamiliarity with the Dionysian symbolic theology, what complicates any attempt to account for his theory of the symbol is his habit of affixing the label *Christian* to all manner of philosophers with whom he feels some affinity. A notion of Christianity that on various occasions encompasses not only Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and Plato but Porphyry and Iamblichus, who explicitly opposed Christianity, is simply too ecumenical to meet the needs of historical explanation.[21] Thus for my purposes the question to be answered is not what Coleridge himself could have meant when he wrote of Christianity or the Trinity, but what those terms would *have* to mean in order to make comprehensible the relation of his symbolist theory to the

[20] See Coleridge, *Marginalia*, iii. 134–9, 1083–4, v. 483; *Notebooks*, i. 1369 and n.; *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829), ed. John Colmer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 166–7, 170. I know of no evidence that Coleridge actually read any of the Dionysian corpus, although Anthony Harding kindly informs me that an edition of it was bound with five other rare theological works in a nonce collection noticed by Coleridge in a bookseller's catalogue in 1833, and a notebook entry of the same year uses an uncommon word found in the Dionysian corpus, $\theta\epsilon o\tau\upsilon\pi\acute{\iota}\alpha$ [*theotupia*] (*Notebooks*, v. 6811 and n.). In general, while Coleridge encountered extensive quotations from the Church Fathers in such English theologians as Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, and Jeremy Taylor, his first-hand reading of the Fathers seems not to have been nearly as extensive as his reading of and about the pagan Greek philosophers.

[21] On Porphyry and Iamblichus see *Lectures 1818–1819: On the History of Philosophy*, ed. J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), i. 429–30 (1 March 1819): 'in the present day these philosophers would have formed a sect amongst us of Christians'. In the *Biographia* Coleridge envisioned his avowedly Christian *Logosophia* as 'no other than the system of Pythagoras and of Plato revived and purified' (*Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. J. Bate, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), i. 263). On Heraclitus see *Lectures 1818–1819*, i. 126–7, 436; *Lay Sermons*, 95, 97–8 and nn.; and *Collected Letters*, ed. E. L. Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956–71), iv. 775 (Sept. 1817). Even Spinoza could be claimed for Christianity: in a note of *c*.1817–18 Coleridge cites a letter from Spinoza to Henry Oldenburg as evidence of Spinoza's conviction that his system was compatible with a belief in Christ as saviour (*Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), i. 610–11). Still, Coleridge's defence of Spinoza personally did not prevent him from using the term *Spinozism*, in accord with the convention of the time, as a synonym for pantheism and atheism: see e.g. *Notebooks*, iii. 3516.

theological tradition. The corollary of the conclusions stated above is that only identities of content will suffice as proof of the survival of authentically theological concepts.

The need for the narrowly defined burden of proof proposed here becomes clearer when we examine the use of both linguistic and functional identities to support the claim that Coleridge's idea of the symbol 'can find its true meaning' only in a religious context.[22] The linguistic evidence consists in Coleridge's description of the relationship between signifier and signified in the symbol as consubstantial: 'Imagination … incorporating the Reason in Images of the Sense, and organizing (as it were) the flux of the Senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the Reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths, of which they are the *conductors*.'[23] To be sure, the word *consubstantial*—or more precisely, the Greek word *homoousios*—is not attested before the second century, and is not well attested before the eruption of the Arian controversy at the beginning of the fourth century, when the Council of Nicaea applied it to the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Trinity. So if one had to choose a term that is exclusive to Christian theology, then *homoousios* would at least be a more plausible choice than *sumbolon*. But the choice itself clarifies nothing about the word's meaning, which was less determinate than its appearance in the Nicene Creed might lead one to imagine.

Referring to the creed, Barth assures us that the origins of the word *homoousios* are 'perfectly clear', whereas in fact they are quite obscure: the earliest surviving instances of its use, in Ptolemaeus and the heresiological writings of Irenaeus and Hippolytus, suggest only that it originated among Christian Gnostics in the second century.[24] And its

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[22] J. Robert Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination: Coleridge and the Romantic Tradition*, 2nd edn. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 37; and cf. Thomas McFarland, 'Involute and Symbol in the Romantic Imagination', in J. Robert Barth and John Mahoney (eds.), *Coleridge, Keats, and the Imagination: Essays in Honor of Walter Jackson Bate* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 29–57, at 41–2.

[23] Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, 29; cf. *Aids to Reflection*, ed. John Beer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 31.

[24] Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, 37; Heinz Kraft, 'ΟΜΟΥΣΙΟΥΣ', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 66 (1954), 1–24; Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 190–202.

use is not even confined to Christians, heretical or otherwise—unless of course one is prepared to impute Christianity to Plotinus and the Hermetic corpus (usually dated to the second century).[25] Careful philological research on the Greek term and its Latin equivalents up to the time of the Council of Nicaea has shown that they bore a considerable variety of theological meanings: '*Homoousios* guarantees very little; it can be used of things which resemble one another merely in belonging to the created order, or to the category of substance; it can relate collaterals to each other, or derivatives with their source; it does not exclude inequality of status or power.'[26] Indeed this semantic elasticity, along with the fact that the Arians refused to consider the Son consubstantial with the Father in any sense, might have been what finally recommended the term to the council, which had not only to anathematize Arianism but also to keep the Eastern and Western factions of the Church reconciled. Since an agreement on the creed itself could never have been secured if an agreement on its interpretation had been demanded as well, the council left the individual bishops free to explain (or explain away) the concept of consubstantiality as they saw fit.[27] In the event, the council achieved neither of its main objectives, for Arianism soon regained favour in the East and *homoousios* fell into general disuse until the orthodoxy of the Nicene Creed was reaffirmed at the Council of Constantinople in 381. The authority of the formulation of 325 having been thus retroactively conferred upon it, Stead's cautionary conclusion to his encyclopedia article is applicable to Barth's assumption about Nicaea's place in doctrinal history: 'The thought that *homoousios* designates a clearly defined special relation between the Father and the Son depends on

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[25] Plotinus, 4. 4. 28. 57 (anger consubstantial with desire), 4. 7. 10. 19–20 (the soul akin to and consubstantial with divine things); *Corpus Hermeticum*, 1. 10 (the divine Logos consubstantial with the demiurgic mind). For other occurrences of the word in the pagan Neoplatonists, see Christopher Stead, 'Homousios', in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. Theodor Klauser et al. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950–), xviii. 364–433, at 383–5.

[26] Stead, *Divine Substance*, 247–8. See also Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, i. 202–10.

[27] Cf. Stead, 'Homousios', 411: 'It is not only difficult to determine the exact meaning of ὁμοούσιος in the Nicene Creed, but futile to search for it. An interpretation of the concept was not laid down; just a signature was demanded [of the bishops], and no thoroughgoing consensus was reached.'

the traditional overinterpretation of Nicaea, which … misinterprets its actual objectives and contemporary effectiveness in the interest of its generally accepted significance in the Middle Ages.'[28]

This absence of a specified meaning is commensurate with the term's function in the Nicene Creed, which is not to explain the mystery of the Trinity but merely to emphasize Christ's divinity. But it is incommensurate with the attempt to connect the Coleridgean symbol to Trinitarian theology. After all, if the meaning of *homoousios* in the creed is radically indeterminate, then how can one be certain that Coleridge's concept of consubstantiality is not more closely related to Plotinus', say, than to post-Nicene theology's? Once again, purely linguistic evidence proves inadequate to the explanatory task that is entrusted to it. Fortunately, however, the unspecific meaning of *homoousios* need not bring the analysis to an end, for there is one meaning without which the term could never have served to distinguish orthodoxy from Arianism. Whatever else it might have meant, it had to mean that the relation of Father and Son is of a different order from that of creator to creation: Christ was not just a human being. From that irreducible meaning of *homoousios*, the extent of Coleridge's affinity with the Trinitarian concept can be deduced.

That Coleridge was prompted by the theological use of the word *consubstantial* to appropriate it for his explanation of the symbol is a highly probable biographical hypothesis, especially in light of a letter of October 1806, in which he pondered the consubstantiality of the Father and Son.[29] But the very probability of this hypothesis has prevented those who want to legitimize the concept of the symbol by virtue of its theological derivation from recognizing the boldness in Coleridge's appropriation. I want to illustrate this

[28] Cf. Stead, 'Homousios', 430.

[29] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, ii. 1195: 'He [sc. the Son] is the substantial Image of God, in whom the Father beholds well-pleased his whole Being—and being substantial (ὁμοούσιος) he of the divine and permanent Will … contemplates the Father in the Father, and the Father in himself, and himself in the Father.' Cf. an annotation on Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying* in *Marginalia*, vi. 626–7. Referring to Coleridge's awareness of Patristic debates about the relationship of the Father and Son, Mary Anne Perkins notes without elaboration that 'this subject has significance for his theory of [the] symbol' (*Coleridge's Philosophy: The Logos as Unifying Principle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 48 n. 51).

misunderstanding among Coleridge's exegetes by way of one of his own, in his reading of Eriugena in 1803.[30] When he objected to Eriugena's formula *facit et fit, et creat et creatur* as pantheistic, Coleridge did not realize that what Eriugena meant here by *creatio* was in fact God's intra-Trinitarian self-manifestation.[31] The divine nature may be considered created in that it generates from within itself the *causae primordiales*—elsewhere associated with the second person of the Trinity—from which all existing things receive their being and essence: 'the divine nature … although it creates all things and cannot be created by anything, is in an admirable manner created in all things which take their being from it … so the divine essence, which when it subsists by itself surpasses every intellect, is correctly said to be created in those things which are made by itself and through itself and in itself and for itself.'[32] Now whereas Coleridge mistook the self-generation of God for the creation of the world in condemning Eriugena as a pantheist, his theologically inclined interpreters have done the opposite in claiming his symbolist theory for Trinitarian theology. The force of this claim will emerge, however, only after we have examined the post-Nicene differentiation of intra-Trinitarian generation from voluntaristic creation in more detail.

By applying Coleridge's description of the symbol to the persons of the Trinity, Barth implies that Coleridgean symbolist theory and Trinitarian ontology are perfectly compatible: 'The Son truly ''symbolizes'' the Father; he ''images him forth,'' at the same time partaking in the most perfect way in the inner reality of the Father.'[33] Removed

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[30] Coleridge, *Notebooks*, i. 1382; *Collected Letters*, ii. 954 (to Robert Southey, 29 June 1803); cf. *Notebooks*, iii. 3516; v. 619–21; and *Marginalia*, iii. 136–7 (a later reading, probably in the 1820s).

[31] Friedrich A. Uehlein, *Die Manifestation des Selbstbewußtseins im konkreten 'Ich bin': Endliches und unendliches Ich im Denken S. T. Coleridges* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1982), 89–90.

[32] Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, 1. 12. 454c, ed. and trans. I. P. Sheldon-Williams and Édouard Jeauneau (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1968–95), i. 64 (translation slightly modified). The text here differs only in accidentals from the one Coleridge read in the *editio princeps* by Thomas Gale (Oxford, 1681), 7–8. On the association of the *causae primordiales* with the Son or Logos (in *Periphyseon*, 3. 9. 642a–d), see Werner Beierwaltes, *Denken des Einen: Studien zur neuplatonischen Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1985), 349–54.

[33] Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, 38.

from its context, this sentence would be perfectly unobjectionable, for it was scriptural references to Christ as the image of God (e.g. 2 Corinthians 4: 4, Colossians 1: 15, Hebrews 1: 3) that had offered the anti-Arian theologians the means of introducing a systematic defence of the Nicene Creed. As early as the fourth century, Marius Victorinus had sought to explain why the Son must be consubstantial with the Father, of whom he is the form and image (*est autem forma et imago dei*).[34] Referring to Colossians 1: 15–17, Victorinus had reasoned as follows: if the Son is prior to all things (*ante omnes* in the Vulgate text), then he must be generated from within God rather than created from nothing; if he is generated from God, then he must share God's substance; and if he is the image of God, then that image must in substance be one with the substance of which and in which it is the image.[35]

The model for this kind of generation was the Neoplatonic system of emanation, in which the whole of reality is conceived as continuously proceeding from and returning to an unchanging singularity. In its procession out of itself, which the Neoplatonists characterized as an overflowing of divine being, the One manifests itself immanently without thereby negating its transcendence. But the inclusion of the visible cosmos among the products of this process would have been a major obstacle to its appropriation by Christian theology for the purpose of distinguishing intra-Trinitarian generation from the creation of the world. Victorinus had therefore to reconceive the emanationist system radically enough to remove its exclusively Neoplatonic content, but not so radically as to remove the features that had attracted him to it in the first place, such as the timelessness of the generative process and the emphasis on divine transcendence.

[34] Victorinus, *Adversus Arium*, 1. 22. 1055d, in *Opera theologica*, ed. Paul Henry and Pierre Hadot (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1971), 90.

[35] Ibid., 1. 24. 1057d, ed. cit., 95: 'Si igitur est prior, non ab homine est et salvator. Si generatio est, non est figmentum. Si autem a deo generatio, non de nihilo. Si imago dei Iesus, ὁμοούσιος est. Imago enim substantia cum substantia cuius est et in qua est imago.' On Victorinus' Trinitarian ontology and its relation to Neoplatonism, see Gerhard Huber, *Das Sein und das Absolute: Studien zur Geschichte der ontologischen Problematik in der spätantiken Philosophie* (Basel: Verlag für Recht und Gesellschaft, 1955), 93–116; and Werner Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1980), 57–74.

This transformation might be called *the reoccupation of systematic positions.*[36] For just as a new government replaces the ministers of the previous government with its own appointees, so Victorinus replaced the Neoplatonic hypostases—the One, the intellect, and the soul—with the persons of the Trinity, thereby restricting the generative process to the divine essence itself. It must however be stressed that the illustrative value of the political analogy is limited by the following consideration: whereas a change in government may or may not effect a change in government policy, the reoccupation of a conceptual system always endows that system with a new content. The original content might condition but cannot survive this process of reception. And as we shall see presently, it is even possible for totally heterogeneous contents to occupy identical positions within a common framework of thought. Thus one way of determining where a systematic reoccupation has occurred is by analysing different applications of a particular theological or philosophical term.

Now Coleridge's explanation of the symbol is analogous to Victorinus's exposition of the Trinity by virtue of grounding the function of representation ontologically in an identity of substance. But there is a fundamental difference between them that would have prevented Coleridge from simply transposing the concept of consubstantiality from the one context to the other. For when he elaborated on consubstantiality of the symbol with what it represents, he was referring not to the second person of the Trinity but, among other things, to nature as God's self-manifestation: 'God is the only solution, God, the one before all, and of all, and through all!—True natural philosophy is comprized in the study of the science and language of *symbols*. The power delegated to nature is all in every part: and by a symbol I mean, not a metaphor or allegory or any other figure of speech or form of

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[36] I appropriate the term *reoccupation* from Hans Blumenberg's *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1966), where it was used in a somewhat different sense as an alternative to *secularization* to explain the process by which the modern age inherited from the Middle Ages fundamental existential questions that medieval theology was no longer able to answer: 'What actually happened in the process interpreted as secularization was not the *transplantation* [*Umsetzung*] of authentically theologically contents into a self-alienated secular form [*in ihre säkulare Selbstentfremdung*], but the *reoccupation* [*Umbesetzung*] of vacated positions of answers [*vakant gewordener Positionen von Antworten*] whose corresponding questions could not simply be eliminated' (p. 42).

fancy, but an actual and essential part of that, the whole of which it represents.'[37]

The relation of Father and Son in the Trinity is one of identity and difference: identity in substance, difference in form. The relation of signifier to signified in the Coleridgean symbol is one of part to whole, for the assertion of the signifier's participation in the signified is supposed to guarantee the 'naturalness' of the signifying function, even when—and exactly because—that function is not intuitively recognizable in natural phenomena. Although the two relations are logically incommensurable, a part being neither the same as nor different from a whole, Coleridge nonetheless had to transform the second relation into the first in order to avoid the error that he was to accuse Jacob Böhme of having made: the error of conceiving God as 'a Whole composed of Parts, of which the World was one'.[38]

   The word *consubstantial* would have presented itself as significant in this context because of its long association with the Nicene doctrine

[37] Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, 79; cf. *Lectures 1818–1819*, ii. 541 (15 March 1819); and *Opus Maximum*, ed. Thomas McFarland and Nicholas Halmi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 288–90. See also, for an earlier instance, *Lectures 1795: On Politics and Religion*, ed. Lewis Patton and Peter Mann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 94–5, 158. James Engell objects to the argument that follows (as presented in abridged form in *Wordsworth Circle*, 26 (1995), 26–30) on the grounds that the immediate context of Coleridge's reference to the consubstantial symbol (in *Lay Sermons*, 29–30) is a discussion of the Old Testament: the divinely inspired prophets offer a narrative that is at once historically true of the Jews and prophetic of the Christian dispensation (*The Committed Word: Literature and Public Values* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 137–8; and cf. *Forming the Critical Mind: Dryden to Coleridge* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 95–9). But this contextual appeal, intended as a response to Paul de Man's critique of Coleridge's concept as well as to my historical account of it, neglects the persistent concern in *The Statesman's Manual* precisely to establish the semiotic equivalence of nature with scripture: 'Let it not weary you if I digress for a few moments to another book, likewise a revelation of God—the great book of his servant Nature. … I seem to myself to behold in the quiet objects on which I am gazing, more than an arbitrary illustration, more than a mere *simile*, the work of my own Fancy! I feel an awe, as if there were before my eyes the same Power, as that of the Reason—the same Power in a lower dignity, and therefore a symbol established in the truth of things … the natural symbol of that higher life of reason' (*Lay Sermons*, 70, 72; cf. 49–50). Coleridge's dissolution of the distinction between ontological realms (human texts, natural objects) is of course entirely characteristic of Romantic symbolist theory.
[38] *Marginalia*, i. 603.

of the Trinity, in which it emphasizes the inherent relation between the divine persons without denying their external differences. If nature were consubstantial with divine reason as the Son is with the Father, then the power delegated to it would indeed be, as Coleridge claimed, 'all in every part'. God, after all, is no less present in the second and third persons of the Trinity than in the first person: 'God *is* one, but exists or manifests himself to himself, at once in a three-fold Act, total in each and one in all.'[39] Indirect encouragement for thus transforming a relation of participation into one of identity in defiance of logic would have come from Kant's resolution, in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786), of matter into the forces of attraction and repulsion (or impenetrability): 'For since impenetrability is intelligible only as a mode of resistance; its admission places the essence of *matter* in an act or power, which it possesses in common with *spirit*; and body and spirit are therefore no longer absolutely heterogeneous.'[40] If substance were definable as spirit rather than matter, it would be that much easier to conceive as equally present everywhere—and as something other than pantheistic.

Schelling was in fundamental agreement with Coleridge both in denying the reality of matter as such and in insisting that the absolute presents itself wholly in every part of nature. With respect to matter he differed from Coleridge only in acknowledging Kant for the proposition that 'matter is itself nothing but a moving force, and as something independent of such a force it is at most conceivable, but can never be real, the object of a perception'.[41] With respect to the presence of the absolute in nature, he differed from Coleridge only in substituting the phrase 'absolute unity' for 'God': 'The whole universe exists in the absolute as a plant, an animal, a person; but because the whole exists in each, it is not the particular unity but the absolute unity that exists as a plant, as an animal, as a person.'[42] It is perhaps

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[39] *Notebooks*, iii. 4427 (Aug.–Sept. 1818).

[40] *Biographia Literaria*, i. 129–30; cf. *Marginalia*, iii. 139, 291. Coleridge's reliance on Kant's *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* for this resolution of the duality of matter and spirit is discussed by G. N. G. Orsini, *Coleridge and German Idealism* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), 199–200.

[41] Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797), *SW* ii. 231–2.

[42] Schelling, *Fernere Darstellungen aus dem System der Philosophie* (1802), *SW* iv. 394. See also *Ideen, SW* ii. 374; *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie* (1801),

surprising that neither Schelling nor Coleridge cited 1 Corinthians 15: 28 as authority for their principle of *omnia in omnibus*, but even if they had, that authority would have been specious. For when Paul teaches that 'God may be all in all', he is referring specifically to thearchic activity after the Last Judgement and not to an intrahistorical relation between creator and creation. An analogy to this promised manifestation of divine power in individual beings would be the operation of Life-in-Death in the Ancient Mariner's dead shipmates:

> They groan'd, they stirr'd, they all uprose,
> Ne spake, ne mov'd their eyes:
> It had been strange, even in a dream
> To have seen those dead men rise.[43]

Regardless of whether consubstantiality meant 'conspirituality' to Coleridge, he used the term in a way that Trinitarian theology not only did not but could not have sanctioned. The defenders of the orthodoxy of the Nicene Creed had sought to demonstrate, with appropriate references to scripture, that the Son is identical in substance with the Father and different in substance from the creation; but they had not sought to define either substance. Such definition was unnecessary for dogmatic purposes. So by committing the world to a relation of consubstantiality with divinity, Coleridge dissolved the very distinction between *generatio ex Deo* and *creatio ex nihilo* on which that defence had been founded. For the purposes of my argument it would not matter whether Coleridge himself recognized the need for this distinction, but two sets of notes from 1827—his annotations on Charles Fleury's *Ecclesiastical History* and the notebook entries based on those annotations—reveal that he did indeed recognize it: 'All Beings are *Created*, save the Father, from whom all are, and the Son, eternally begotten of the Father, and the

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SW iv. 130; *Bruno, ein Gespräch* (1802), *SW* iv. 290; and *Aphorismen zur Einleitung in die Naturphilosophie* (1806), *SW* vii. 143, 149–50. On the Neoplatonic heritage of this principle and its importance in Schelling's philosophy, see Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus*, 2nd edn. (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 2004), 114–18.

[43] *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* (1798 version), ll. 323–6, in *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Nicholas Halmi, Paul Magnuson, and Raimonda Modiano (New York: Norton, 2003), 80.

uncreated Spirit eternally proceeding—and the Father, the Son and the Spirit are the one only God.'[44]

Since the theological provenance of the term *consubstantial* has paradoxically disguised the incompatibility of Coleridge's conception of the symbol with even a minimally orthodox understanding of the Trinity, it may be useful to consider briefly an analogous conflation of *generatio* and *creatio*, Giordano Bruno's extension of the divine attribute of infinitude to the universe. Reconciling the Scholastic emphasis on God's omnipotence with the Platonic principle that the creator, being free of jealousy, created the cosmos as much as possible like himself, Bruno insisted that God must have exhausted his creative potential in the act of creation. Thus he rejected the medieval differentiation of what God actually created from what he could have created: of *potentia ordinata* from *potentia absoluta*, or in Nicolaus Cusanus's terms of *infinitas privitiva* from *infinitas absoluta*.[45] In the first dialogue of *On the Infinite* (1584), Bruno had his spokesman, unsubtly but characteristically named Filoteo, demand of his opponents,

Why would we or could we think that divine efficacy is idle? … Why would you want the center of divinity … to remain envious and sterile? … Why should infinite capacity be frustrated, or the infinite worlds that could exist be cheated of the possibility of existence, or the excellence of the divine image be jeopardized when it should be able to shine in an unlimited mirror and according to its own infinite and immense nature?[46]

When God must create all that he can create, however, creation becomes self-reproduction. And a God who reproduces himself *as*

[44] Coleridge, *Marginalia*, ii. 732 and nn.; cf. 725–6, 730–1 and nn.

[45] See Paul-Henri Michel, *La Cosmologie de Giordano Bruno* (Paris: Hermann, 1962), 165–91; Hans Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*, 3rd edn. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), 654–60; and Hilary Gatti, *Giordano Bruno and Renaissance Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 111–14. Cf. Nicolaus Cusanus, *De docta ignorantia*, 2. 1 §97, 2. 4 §113, ed. Paul Wilpert and H. G. Senger, 2nd edn. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1977), 12, 30, 32; and Plato, *Timaeus*, 29e.

[46] *De l'infinito, universo e mondi*, in *Œuvres complètes*, gen. ed. Yves Hersant and Nicole Ordine (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1993–), iv. 83–5. Defending the idea of an infinite universe as 'the effect of infinite divine power', Bruno told the Venetian Inquisition on 2 June 1592 that he considered a finite world unworthy to be the product of divine goodness and power: 'cosa indegna della divina bontà e potentia' (Bruno, *Documents*, ed. Luigi Firpo and Alain-Philippe Segonds (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2000–), i. 65, 67).

the universe cannot then introduce himself *into* it in a unique act of incarnation.

Bruno's replacement of the Son with the universe itself was made explicit in his dialogue *On the Cause* (1584), where another Teofilo describes the universe not only as 'the great simulacrum, the great image' (*il grande simulacro, la grande imagine*) of the first principle—a description that would have been acceptable to Cusanus—but also as its 'only-begotten nature' (*l'unigenita natura*).[47] Small wonder, then, that when later questioned by Venetian Inquisition, Bruno admitted that although he believed all that a Christian faith required him to believe about the first person of the Trinity, he had doubts about the second person, whose incarnation he was unable to comprehend philosophically (*nelli termini della filosofia non l'ho inteso*). Thus he adhered to the doctrine of the Incarnation 'with wavering faith' (*con inconstante fede*).[48] Transforming the privitively infinite into the absolutely infinite, Bruno sacrificed his Christianity for the sake of his God, a sacrifice that found its ultimate expression in his turning violently away from the crucifix that was held before him in the Campo de' Fiori on 17 February 1600.[49]

Just over two centuries later, by which time (as mentioned in Chapter 2) the infiniteness of space and the plurality of worlds were much more widely accepted postulates, Percy Bysshe Shelley not only reached the same conclusion as Bruno but expressed it in the extraordinary notes to *Queen Mab*, a poem he published under his own name: 'It is impossible to believe that the Spirit that pervades this infinite machine, begat a son upon the body of a Jewish woman; or is angered at the consequences of that necessity, which is a synonime of itself. All that miserable tale of Devil, and Eve, and an Intercessor, with the childish mummeries of the God of the Jews, is irreconcileable with the knowledge of the stars. The works of his fingers have borne witness against him.'[50]

[47] *De la causa, principio et uno*, in *Œuvres complètes*, iii. 207.

[48] *Le Procès*, in *Documents*, i. 73, 69, 75 (2 June 1592).

[49] Ibid. 507 (Caspar Schoppe to Conrad Rittershausen, 17 Feb. 1600): 'cum Salvatoris crucifixi imago … ostenderetur, torvo eam vultu aspernatus reiecit'.

[50] *Queen Mab* (1813), n. 2 (to 1. 252–3), in *The Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Donald Reiman and Neil Fraistat (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000–), ii. 239–40. Cf. Karl Guthke, *The Last Frontier: Imagining Other Worlds,*

If his cosmological speculations had achieved the same degree of consistency as Bruno's, or if he had been less concerned after 1805 to assert his Christian orthodoxy, Coleridge might have realized that the relation in which he sought to ground nature's meaningfulness to humanity excludes the possibility of a historical incarnation of divinity. To the extent that it retains the systematic framework of the Trinitarian doctrine of divine self-generation, Coleridge's theory of the symbol, like Bruno's theory of creation, displaces the Son and replaces him with the universe. The constituent elements of the symbol—God and nature, infinite and finite, unity and multeity, eternity and time—'reoccupy' the systematic positions of the divine persons, just as those persons had once reoccupied the positions of the Neoplatonic hypostases. This reoccupation should not be confused, however, with the *secularization* of Christian teachings, such as M. H. Abrams has claimed to discover in numerous other examples of the Romantic appropriation of theological language:

The process ... has not been the deletion and replacement of religious ideas but rather the assimilation and reinterpretation of religious ideas, as constitutive elements in a world view founded on secular premises. Much of what distinguishes writers I call 'Romantic' derives from the fact that they undertook, whatever their religious creed or lack of creed, to save traditional concepts, schemes, and values which had been based on the relation of the Creator to his creature and creation.'[51]

What secularization means here is not merely 'the separation of spiritual or ecclesiastical ideas and thoughts from their connection to divinity [*göttliche Beziehung*]', to quote the definition given in an authoritative encyclopedia of religion, but more importantly the preservation of those ideas and thoughts *by means of* such separation.[52] Whereas reoccupation preserves a conceptual system in form while changing it in content, secularization does just the opposite. Thus contrary to the assumption stated by Abrams in a rejoinder

from the Copernican Revolution to Modern Science Fiction, trans. Helen Atkins (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 202–3.

[51] Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971), 13.

[52] Siegfried Reicke, 'Säkularisation', in Kurt Galling (ed.), *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd edn. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1957–65), v. 1280.

to his critics, 'the remarkable retention … of the central terms and images in the biblical design of history' is exactly what cannot be accepted as evidence of the secularization of theological concepts.[53] Ironically, the most direct challenge to the methodology of *Natural Supernaturalism* could have come seven years before its publication: among the listeners to a paper that Abrams presented in Cologne in 1964 was Hans Blumenberg, who several years earlier had begun criticizing historiographical applications of the idea of secularization. In particular he rejected the argument, introduced by Karl Löwith and Rudolf Bultmann and later adopted by Abrams, that modern conceptions of immanent historical progress and secular philosophies of history are secularized forms of Christian eschatology.[54] But when Blumenberg was invited to comment directly on Abrams's derivation of modernist poetics from Christian theology, he strangely declined: 'I don't want to speak against M. H. Abrams's secularization schema. Methodologically, the essential thing would be to show the conditions under which one can speak of secularization. In what relation do the secularized concepts stand to their point of departure?'[55]

The fundamental issue here, as in the case of *Toposforschung*, is whether the presupposition of substantial historical continuities does not foreclose the possibility of further investigation into the material that is adduced as evidence of them. To be sure, Abrams is

[53] Abrams, 'Rationality and Imagination in Cultural History', in *Doing Things with Texts: Essays in Criticism and Critical Theory* (New York: Norton, 1989), 113–34, at 122.

[54] See e.g. *Natural Supernaturalism*, 58–9, 187–8; and 'Apocalypse: Theme and Romantic Variations', in *The Correspondent Breeze: Essays on English Romanticism* (New York: Norton, 1984), 225–57. For a similar interpretation of Romantic philosophy on a smaller scale, see Ernst Benz, *Les Sources mystiques de la philosophie romantique allemande* (Paris: Vrin, 1968), 33–53. Blumenberg's ' "Säkularisation": Kritik einer Kategorie historischer Illegitimität', presented at the Seventh German Congress for Philosophy in 1962 and then printed in its proceedings (Helmut Kuhn and Franz Wiedmann (eds.), *Die Philosophie und die Frage nach dem Fortschritt* (Munich: Pustet, 1964), 240–65), was expanded as part 1 of *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*. His criticisms were directly principally at Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949) and Rudolf Bultmann's *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957).

[55] Wolfgang Iser (ed.), *Immanente Ästhetik, ästhetische Reflexion: Lyrik als Paradigma der Moderne* (Munich: Fink, 1966), 422. The paper under discussion, 'Coleridge, Baudelaire, and Modernist Poetics', was printed in this volume (113–38) and reprinted in *The Correspondent Breeze*, 109–44.

careful to speak of historical continuities rather than constants, and specifically disavows any commitment to a 'Platonic belief' in 'eternal ideas or universal traits of human nature'.[56] But when, in the third chapter of *Natural Supernaturalism*, he traces the history of emanative systems from Gnosticism and Neoplatonism to Romanticism, he is led willy-nilly into the very Platonism against which he invokes the concept of secularization. I am referring not to the distinction between appearance and essence, without which it would simply be meaningless to speak of secularization, but rather to the eidetic status that Abrams must concede emanationism, which he calls the idea of the 'great circle' of alienation from and reintegration with the absolute, in order to account for the fact that it is not originally Christian. It follows from his definition of secularization as a formal process that whatever can be secularized at one point in its history (in passing from Christian theology to Romantic philosophy and literature) can also be, or have been, desecularized at another (in passing from Neoplatonic philosophy to Christian theology). In that case, however, the secularization thesis loses its claim to be an instrument of historical understanding, for a concept or conceptual system can be described as secularized in form only to the extent that it can be described as Christian in content. If a concept is not essentially religious, then we learn nothing about it by being told that it is only apparently secular. So as one reviewer of *Natural Supernaturalism* implied by aligning the secularization thesis with archetypal criticism, what Abrams presents as an historical explanation of Romanticism is actually an anti-historical one.[57]

By distinguishing more rigorously between continuities of content and of form in the history of ideas—something that the concept of reoccupation enables one to do—Abrams might have avoided what J. Hillis Miller rightly considered two major weaknesses of *Natural*

[56] Abrams, 'Rationality and Imagination', 120; cf. *Natural Supernaturalism*, 65–6: 'If we … remain unaware of the full extent to which characteristic concepts and patterns of Romantic philosophy and literature are a displaced and reconstituted theology … that is because we … readily mistake our hereditary ways of organizing experience for the conditions of reality and the universal forms of thought.'

[57] Roger Sharrock, *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 24 (1973), 351: 'Most of Mr Abrams's patterns, which he assigns to a particular phase of secularization in the history of European culture, would be treated as archetypes by the Jungians.'

Supernaturalism: its tendency to treat analogously structured con-
ceptual systems as essentially equivalent fictions, and its consequent
inability to explain 'what is involved in the humanization of the-
ological patterns'.[58] Even this criticism, though, is more charitable
to Abrams than it might appear to be, or perhaps was meant to
be. Miller would ask *why* the Romantics secularized the Christian
tradition—a question that still presupposes the accuracy of Abrams's
central contention—whereas I would ask *if* indeed they did. When
Coleridge, to return to him, appropriated theological language to
define the symbol, what he achieved, however unwittingly, was not a
secularization but a contradiction of Trinitarian theology.

I do not claim of Coleridge, as St Jerome said of St Paul, that like a true
David he used the enemy's own sword to behead him.[59] Coleridge's
allusion to the Trinity in his symbolist theory is devoid of the cunning
that Jerome attributed to Paul's allusions to pagan philosophy, for
Coleridge was not seeking to discredit what he was appropriating.
On the contrary, the 'Confessio Fidei' of November 1810 attests to
his conscious rejection of Unitarianism in favour of Trinitarianism,
including the doctrine of the Incarnation, while the numerous public
and private statements adduced by Thomas McFarland confirm
Coleridge's acceptance of Trinitarianism as the only viable alternative
to pantheism, the moral implications of which had consistently
disturbed him.[60] Indeed he was no less capable of rationalizing the
Trinity with means provided by Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* than he
was of rationalizing the symbol with means provided by Trinitarian
theology. But to appropriate Schelling's self-affirming absolute for
his own theological purposes, Coleridge had to replace the stages
in the dialectic of self-affirmation, including the realization of the

[58] Miller, 'Tradition and Difference', *Diacritics*, 2/4 (1972), 8: 'If I redefine the
Christian and Neo-Platonic tradition as a human creation and take possession of it as
such, it would seem that I have destroyed it in the sense that I might be able to create
something entirely different. Why is it that Wordsworth, Blake, Novalis, and the rest,
in Abrams's interpretation, created the same patterns all over again?'

[59] Jerome, *Epistolae*, no. 70, §2, in Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina*
(Paris, 1844–64), xxii. 665: 'Didicerat enim a vero David, extorquere de manibus
hostium gladium, et Goliae superbissimi caput proprio mucrone truncare.'

[60] Coleridge, *Notebooks*, iii. 4005; McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), ch. 4.

absolute in nature, with the persons of the Trinity.[61] In this respect his explanation of the Trinity is the reverse of his explanation of the symbol, for here the Son reoccupies the position of the world.

Thus acknowledging that Coleridge resorted to a decidedly unorthodox connection of God and nature to persuade himself of nature's meaningfulness is by no means equivalent to denying that he believed in traditional theological doctrines and relied on their provisions of human free will and divine intervention in history to account for the existence of evil and the possibility of release from it. If anything, his inability to base ethics and natural philosophy on the same set of cosmogonic assumptions confirms Goethe's sense of the need for a notion of divinity that could be altered according to the purpose it was expected to serve: 'We are pantheists in the study of nature, polytheists in poetry, monotheists in ethics.'[62] Of course Coleridge would not have affirmed such a need, much less Goethe's answer to it, which virtually parodies the Trinity. But the fact remains that his considerations of theological issues could be far more radical, and his appropriations of theological language far more daring, than his occasional professions of faith would authorize one to expect. The unresolved coexistence of contradictory theological conceptions exemplifies the 'muddlesome doubleness' that Seamus Perry has identified as characteristic of Coleridge's thought.[63] But in the present context it is insufficient to speak of a muddle. As Henry Crabb Robinson, a close and often shrewd observer of Coleridge, noted more pointedly, 'Coleridge is very desirous to be a refined and subtle philosopher and metaphysician, and at the same time conform with the people in its religion. That this desire is consciously excited by any unworthy suggestions, or that he is grossly insincere in any

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[61] Coleridge, *Notebooks*, iii. 4427. Raimonda Modiano discusses this note of 1818 in *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 189–90, but I cannot accept her interpretation of it as partially reconciling Trinitarian theology with Romantic *Naturphilosophie*.

[62] Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*, no. 807, *GA* ix. 608 (and cf. xvii. 774).

[63] Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 7–34, at 12. Perry cites approvingly Thomas McFarland's reference to Coleridge's 'including temperament', but the citation is tellingly selective: McFarland's complete phrase is 'reconciling and including temperament' (*Romanticism and the Heritage of Rousseau* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 243). Like Perry, I distinguish reconciliation from inclusiveness.

of his assertions, I do not believe; but I believe there is in him much self-deception.'[64]

The essential ambiguity of Coleridge's conception of divinity allowed him to avoid making the choice that his theory of the consubstantial symbol would otherwise have presented: the choice between simply rejecting the Incarnation as incomprehensible, as Bruno had done, or more prudently allegorizing it as the philosophically necessary unity of the transcendent and the immanent, as the German Idealists did. Schelling, for example, taught that the Incarnation must be understood not as God's assumption of human nature 'at a definite moment in time' but rather as 'the humanization of eternity', a process of which 'the man Christ appears only as the summit and to that extent also the beginning, since his successors were supposed to continue it in such a way that they would all be parts of one and the same body as that of which he is the head'.[65] Schleiermacher replaced the hypostatic union with self-consciousness, so that Jesus was now distinguished from other persons only by the 'magnificent clarity [*herrliche Klarheit*]' with which he perceived and communicated 'the idea that everything finite requires higher mediations to be connected with divinity'.[66] Hegel too conceived the Incarnation as a kind of self-consciousness, but related it to the self-realization of the spirit and absolute knowledge: in becoming human the divine essence becomes conscious of itself as spirit, 'for the spirit is the knowledge of itself in its externalization, the essence … retaining its likeness with itself in its otherness'.[67]

[64] Robinson, *On Books and Their Writers*, ed. Edith J. Morley (London: Dent, 1938), i. 108.

[65] Schelling, *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums* (1803), lect. 9, *SW* v. 296–305, at 297–8.

[66] Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 167. The sentence contains an etymological pun, as *herrlich* ('magnificent, glorious') derives from *Herr*, one of whose meanings is 'Lord'; in the next sentence Schleiermacher puns on his own name in the phrase *den Schleier hinwegnehmen* ('to take away the veil').

[67] Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), ed. Hans-Friedrich Wessels and Heinrich Clairmont (Hamburg: Meiner, 1988), 494: 'In ihr [sc. der absoluten Religion] wird das Wesen als Geist gewußt, oder sie ist sein Bewußtsein über sich, Geist zu sein. Denn der Geist ist das Wissen seiner selbst in seiner Entäußerung; das Wesen … in seinem Andersein die Gleichheit mit sich selbst zu behalten.' In his later lectures on religion Hegel explained that although the concept of incarnation has been developed most completely (*vollkommen ausgebildet*) in Christianity, it is an essential element

Because he understood that 'in orthodox Christianity the incarnation of the Logos in Jesus Christ is *the Religion* itself', Coleridge did not follow his German contemporaries in denying the historicity of the divine incarnation in Jesus, although he was prepared to admit that the Logos had manifested itself incompletely in certain of the Old Testament prophets.[68] However, that he was able explicitly to affirm in one context what he implicitly rejected in another does not mean that his belief in the hypostatic union *never* came into conflict with his concept of the consubstantial symbol. Their point of conflict was, logically enough, their point of intersection in his reflections on the Christian sacrament in which incarnation and symbolic function coincide: the Eucharist. A brief examination of that subject will bring this chapter to a close.

What makes the conflict obvious is the limit to which Coleridge was able to apply his theory of the symbol to defending the doctrine of the Real Presence. This defence began in an appendix to *The Statesman's Manual*, when he pressed his distinction between symbol and metaphor into service against the sacramentarian view of the Eucharist as strictly a metaphor for and remembrance of Christ. As a symbol, the sacrament must be *essentially* connected with what it represents: 'mysterious as the symbol may be, the sacramental Wine is no mere or arbitrary memento'.[69] Thus Coleridge could have agreed with the aphorist Georg Christoph Lichtenberg that 'the dispute about *to mean* [*bedeuten*] and *to be* [*sein*], which has instigated so much mischief [*Unheil*] in religion, might have been more beneficial

(*wesentliches Moment*) of all religions (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, in *Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), xvi. 75; cf. 81).

[68] Coleridge, *Marginalia*, iii. 662 (annotation on Lessing's *Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*). Cf. the 'Confessio Fidei' of 3 Nov. 1810 (*Notebooks*, iii. 4005): 'I believe that this Assumption of Humanity by the ~~Godhead~~ Son of God was revealed & realized to us by the Word made flesh, and manifested to us, in Jesus Christ. … ' On the Old Testament prophets, see e.g. *Marginalia*, i. 438; ii. 151; vi. 319; and *Notebooks*, v. 5517, 6283.

[69] Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, 88. For further instances of Coleridge's opposition to the sacramentarians, see *Marginalia*, i. 524; ii. 279–80; *Notebooks*, iv. 5215; and *Table Talk*, ed. Carl Woodring (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), i. 135–6 (13 May 1830).

[*heilsamer*] if it had been conducted about other matters', but not that 'it is the general source of misfortune that we believe the things really are what they merely mean'.[70] In scattered statements of the 1820s and 1830s Coleridge continued to refer to the Eucharist as a symbol and to define it as 'a part, or particular instance selected as representative of the whole, of which whole however it is itself an actual, or real part'.[71] But it was one thing to explain *that* the sacramental elements truly participate in Christ, and something else to explain *how* they do so.

For the latter purpose Coleridge might have appealed to the idea of the consubstantiality of signifier and signified. That would have been consistent not only with his own understanding of the symbol, but also with the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation, according to which the substance of the body and blood of Christ coexists with the original substance of the consecrated bread and wine in a manner that Luther himself, with characteristic homeliness, illustrated with an analogy from the blacksmith's shop: 'Consider how the two substances of iron and fire are mixed in red-hot iron, so that each part is equally iron and fire: why is it not much more possible for the glorious body of Christ to exist that way in all parts of the bread's substance?'[72] Surprisingly, while proposing the equivalence of symbol and sacrament in Coleridge's mind, Robert Barth was silent about the parallels between Coleridge's symbolist theory and Luther's Eucharistic theology.[73] Central to both are the concepts of synecdoche (*pars pro toto*) and ubiquity (*totus in omni parte*). Seeking scriptural

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[70] Lichtenberg, *Sudelbücher*, A114 (written between 1764 and 1771), in *Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Wolfgang Promies (Munich: Hanser, 1967–92), i. 33. In C34 (from 1773) he noted, by contrast—and too soon—'It is fortunate that we do not investigate *being* [*das Sein*] and *meaning* [*Bedeuten*] in other things' (i. 160).

[71] *Marginalia*, i. 862 (an annotation on Charles Butler's *Vindication of 'The Book of the Roman Catholic Church'*); cf. pp. 524–5, 704, and v. 550 (an annotation on Jeremy Taylor's *Real Presence*).

[72] Luther, *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae praeludium*, in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar, 1883–), vi. 510: 'Ecce ignis et ferrum duae substantiae sic miscentur in ferro ignito, ut quaelibet pars sit ferrum et ignis: cur non multo magnis corpus gloriosum Christi sic in omni parte substantiae panis esse possit?' This analogy, which Luther repeated eight years later in *Vom Abendmahl Christi, Bekenntnis* (*Werke*, xxvi. 444), had already been used in Patristic times to elucidate the hypostatic union of Christ's divine and human natures: see, e.g. Origen, *De principiis*, 2. 6. 6.

[73] Cf. Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, 31–46.

support for his belief in the complete as well as real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, Luther had insisted that the words instituting the sacrament are meant as a synecdoche: 'this is my body … this is my blood'. And from this synecdochical understanding of the Eucharist had followed his teaching on ubiquity, which maintains that the mysterious nature of the divine presence in the world permits Christ to be fully present in a given place without being confined to it.[74]

But far from accepting the doctrine of consubstantiation, Coleridge found it even more objectionable than the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which the Church of England specifically condemns in its twenty-eighth Article of Religion. (According to the Roman doctrine, only the 'accidents' of the bread and wine remain after consecration, while their substance is entirely transformed into that of the body and blood of Christ.) As early as 1810 Coleridge declared 'not indeed that Transubstantiation is a Doctrine of Scripture, but that it is a mistaken conception of a true doctrine, far nearer the truth … than the Consubstantiation of Luther, which according to that ubiquity of the Body of Christ which he deduced from the union of God with man … allows of no peculiarity of the sacramental Elements, but applies equally to every morsel of food taken by Man & Beast thro' out the Universe'.[75] Though perhaps unfair to Luther, this objection to the concept of divine ubiquity suggests that Coleridge regarded symbols consumed at the altar as somehow different from symbols beheld through the window. What remains unclear from

[74] For Luther's fullest exposition of his mature Eucharistic theology, see *Vom Abendmahl Christi*, in *Werke*, xxvi. 241–509, esp. 339–49 (on ubiquity) and 441–5 (on synecdoche). For further details see Albrecht Peters, *Realpräsenz* (Berlin: Lutherischen Verlagshaus, 1960), 86–113. The obvious objection among both Catholics and Reformers to Luther's doctrine of ubiquity was that it failed adequately to distinguish Christ's sacramental presence from divine omnipresence: see Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, 104–10; Ernst Bizer, *Studien zur Geschichte des Abendmahlsstreits im 16. Jahrhundert* (1940; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962), 352–62; Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, iv. 160, 357–8; Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image*, 308–18.

[75] Coleridge, *Notebooks*, iii. 3847 (June 1810); cf. *Marginalia*, i. 862–3 (on Charles Butler), v. 4–5, and *Table Talk*, i. 136 n. 5 (on William Sherlock). In an annotation of 1814–15 (or possibly later) on Richard Field's *Book of the Church*, Coleridge is less categorical in his opposition to the Lutheran doctrine, allowing it an 'intelligible Sense' on the somewhat cryptically expressed condition that 'by Substance be meant id quod verè est' and 'the divine Nature be sole ens verè ens' (*Marginalia*, ii. 671).

this early foray into sacramental theology, however, is whether he conceived the Eucharist to be one species within the genus *symbolus* or something *sui generis*.

Two decades later this ambiguity was resolved in an annotation on John Donne's *Sermons*. Reaffirming his disagreement with Lutheran orthodoxy, Coleridge opined that Luther would never have 'had to seek a murky Hiding-hole in the figment of Consubstantiation' if he had understood 'the true definition of a Symbol as distinguished from the Thing on one hand, and from a mere metaphor or conventional exponent of a Thing, on the other'.[76] We are not told what this definition is, but we are told enough to know that it is not the one with which we are already familiar—which is to say, the one Coleridge shared with the German Romantics. That he assumed the relation of signifier to signified to be synecdochical in everything he called a symbol, be it the Eucharist or the moon dim-glimmering outside his window, did not prevent him from drawing contradictory conclusions from that assumption. In *The Statesman's Manual* the symbol is defined as consubstantial with the truth of which it is the conductor, but in this annotational animadversion on Luther it is defined as incompatible with such consubstantiality. When he proposes the concept of the symbol as a corrective to the doctrine of consubstantiation, he is implying that the Eucharist cannot be consubstantial with the body and blood of Christ *because* it is symbolic of them. Coleridge may therefore be credited with not one but two concepts of the symbol, virtually identical and mutually exclusive. As Heraclitus would say, each lives the other's death.

The dissociation of synecdoche from consubstantiality is made necessary by Coleridge's desire to account for the Real Presence without imputing divinity to the sacramental elements themselves. That imputation, which turns the sacrament into an idol, was what he found objectionable in the doctrines of consubstantiation and transubstantiation alike. The difference between the Lutheran and Catholic doctrines is 'only a difference between the same absurdity', an absurdity that consists in making 'the Symbol representant, the whole thing represented'.[77] But in order to avoid this absurdity himself, Coleridge had to reverse the procedure by which he had

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[76] *Marginalia*, ii. 280.   [77] Ibid. i. 862.

already deduced the symbol to be the *same* as what it symbolizes — the deduction that for Schelling was so brilliantly expressed in the coinage *tautegorical*. In other words, the symbol is now supposed to be *different* from that of which it is a part. Whereas in the tautegorical symbol the relations of participation and identity are conflated, in the sacramental symbol they are opposed. The symbol can be tautegorical or sacramental, it appears, but not both.

Small wonder, then, that Coleridge more than once affirmed the principle *rem credimus, modum nescimus* — a refusal of explanation — to be the '*most* rational Doctrine' concerning the Eucharist, even though he also acknowledged it to be 'a poor evasion'.[78] By denying his concept of the sacramental symbol the predicate *consubstantiality* that he allowed his concept of the tautegorical symbol, he managed not merely to avoid openly violating Leibniz's law of the identity of indiscernibles, but more importantly to avoid confronting the fact that his assertion of a synecdochical relation between nature and the divine reason excluded the possibility of the Incarnation itself, let alone its repetition in the Eucharist. But it is possible that this knowledge lay just below the threshold of Coleridge's consciousness.

Consider one of his annotations, probably dating from the 1820s, on Luther's *Table Talk*. While retaining his definition of the Eucharist as a synecdochical symbol, he revised his definition of what it symbolizes. No longer, or not solely, is the Incarnation represented, but the sum of the actions demanded of Christians by their religion: 'The ceremonial Sign, viz. the eating the Bread and drinking the Wine, became a *Symbol* — i.e. a solemn instance and exemplification of the *Class* of mysterious acts, which we are, or as Christians *should* be, performing daily & hourly in every social duty and recreation. — This is indeed to re-create the Man in and by Christ.'[79] The implication here is that for Coleridge divinity is not so much ritually readmitted into the world as perpetually present in it and manifested in our actions. Perhaps, therefore, it was because he deemed it unnecessary that, despite enjoining the Eucharist on others in *The Statesman's Manual*,

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[78] Ibid. v. 5 (*c*.1820), 554 (on Jeremy Taylor, after 1816); ii. 281 (on Donne, 1831–2).

[79] Ibid. iii. 757–8.

Coleridge declined to receive it himself for thirty-six years—until Christmas Day of 1827, as he recorded in his notebook.[80] Or perhaps, believing that the bread was an actual and essential part of that, the whole of which it represented, he simply feared biting off more than he could chew.

[80] *Notebooks*, v. 5703; cf. *Lay Sermons*, 87–8; *Aids to Reflection*, 386–7 n. 13.

5

Uses of Mythology

καί ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλόσοφός πώς ἐστιν.
Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1. 982b18

The promise of the possible is a compensation for the absence of the actual. Had the kind of symbol the Romantics theorized presented itself to them as an intuitively obvious phenomenon, they would not have needed to theorize it in the first place: it is only when something is not supposed to exist that its existence demands explanation. Thus it is hardly surprising that the symbol's theorists should have sought confirmation of the possibility of its existence. But because the relation of possible to actual is normally interpreted temporally as a relation of future to present, it is striking that some of those theorists—not all, to be sure, and not without controversy—sought their confirmation in the records of antiquity, particularly in Greek mythology. The logic is clear: the symbol can exist because it has existed (and may even now be recognized as such). But the procedure is suspect: like the Delphic oracle, antiquity does not speak for itself but requires interpreters, a fact that makes it extraordinarily useful in serving contemporary needs. Projecting the realization of one's ideals and the fulfilment of one's hopes into the past, as a state that existed once and by implication may exist again, entails less danger of contradiction than projecting them into the future, although that kind of projection is not absent from early Romanticism.

The 'discovery' of the symbol in antiquity may be understood as a response, at least in part, to the obstacles confronting the creation of a 'new mythology', a project conceived by the early German Romantics

in explicit opposition to classical mythology. Although the purpose of an oppositional definition is to privilege one term at the expense of another, the logic of opposition renders the term to be privileged entirely dependent on the one to be suppressed: having determined to distinguish their prospective mythology from an existing one, the Romantics could hardly avoid referring to the latter. But it was not only for definitional reasons that the one mythology proved impossible to disentangle fully from the other. Just as the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, inaugurated in the late seventeenth century as an assertion of advancements in knowledge and manners since antiquity, paradoxically stimulated a half-century of intense interest in and identification with antiquity—the age of Winckelmann and Thomas Percy—so the Romantics wound up answering their call for a new mythology by seeking assistance from the old. There were, however, limits to the amount of assistance they could accept, and one of those limits was reached, as this final chapter will elaborate, in the project of a new mythology, with which the early German Romantics sought to continue the emancipatory work of enlightenment by the very means from which the Enlightenment had imagined itself to have been emancipated. For all its shrewdness, Friedrich Schlegel's observation that everyone finds in the ancients what he needs or wants—above all himself—is not the last word on the Romantics' relations with classical mythology.[1]

Nearly a century ago the critic Fritz Strich began his two-volume study of mythology in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German literature by observing that a concern with the idea of mythology lay at the core of German Romanticism.[2] It is a significant observation, the precision of which should not escape notice: *mythology* is not the

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[1] Schlegel, *Athenäumsfragmente* (1798), no. 151, *KA* ii. 189. For a capacious overview of the *Querelle* with particular reference to eighteenth-century historical criticism, see D. L. Patey, 'Ancients and Moderns', in H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (eds.), *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. iv of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 32–71. Frank Manuel's *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959) remains a useful guide, as does James Engell's *Forming the Critical Mind: Dryden to Coleridge* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 76–94.

[2] Strich, *Die Mythologie in der deutschen Literatur von Klopstock bis Wagner* (1910; Bern: Francke, 1970), i, pp. vii–viii.

same as myths, nor the *idea* of mythology the same as mythology. Francis Bacon's *Wisdom of the Ancients* (1609) offers interpretations of classical myths, Vico's *New Science* (1725) a theory of ancient mythology, the crucial difference between them, which determines their respective critical methods, consisting in the degree of their detachment from the belief that the stories of the gods contain eternal truths about man and the world. It was because the gods retained a numinous power in the Renaissance that Bacon could propose to elucidate their original, mysterious meanings even after acknowledging their susceptibility to arbitrary appropriation for contemporary ideological ends:

Neither am I ignorant how fickle and inconstant a thing fiction is, as being subject to be drawn and wrested any way, and how great the commoditie of wit and discourse is, that is able to apply things well, yet so as neuer meant by the first Authors. But I remember that this liberty hath beene lately much abused; in that many to purchase the reuerence of Antiquitie to their owne inuentions and fancies, haue for the same intent laboured to wrest many poeticall Fables…. But concerning humane wisdome, I doe indeed ingenuously and freely confesse, that I am inclined to imagine, that vnder some of the ancient fictions lay couched certaine mysteries and Allegories, euen from their first intention [*iam ab origine*].[3]

But while the study of mythology, as distinct from individual myths, became possible when the myths themselves were viewed no longer as transhistorically true or false but as historical artefacts—as was the case with Vico, who accordingly rejected the premise of Bacon's exegeses[4]—an interest in the *idea* of mythology, as distinct from mythology itself, arose when the social function ascribed to ancient mythology began to seem attractive in the face of distinctly modern discontents. In this latter development the decisive figure was Herder, who, whether or not he was influenced by Vico, departed

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[3] Bacon, *De sapientia veterum* (London, 1609), sigs. A8ᵛ–A9; *The Wisdome of the Ancients*, trans. A. Gorges (London, 1619), sigs. a6, a7. Cf. *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), in *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, gen. ed. Graham Rees (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996–), iv. 74–5; and see Gordon Teskey, *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 87–92.
[4] Vico, *Princìpi di scienza nuova* (3rd edn., 1744) [§384], in *Opere filosofiche*, ed. Nicola Cristofolini (Florence: Sansoni, 1971), 479. Cf. Joseph Mali, *The Rehabilitation of Myth: Vico's 'New Science'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 142–9.

from a strictly historicist explanation of mythology to consider the possibility of a modern mythology rooted in vernacular national history.

The basis of this possibility, as adumbrated in Herder's essay 'On the Modern Use of Mythology' (1767), is a functional continuity among all mythologies: by providing common stocks of stories and images that may be applied allegorically to all spheres of thought and action, they serve as instruments of social identification and unification. Whatever its content, a mythology is the fullest expression of a particular nation or people (*Volk*), 'part history, part allegory, part religion, part mere poetic framework'.⁵ Herder was a universalist with respect to the social function of mythology and a historicist with respect to its content. Thus despite his view of myths as quasi-allegorical, he did not share Bacon's interest in extracting the meanings of the classical myths. Indeed the point of his essay is that the Germans must have their own myths, appropriate to their geography, climate, language, history, religion, and character. But because he recognized the difficulty of creating a mythology from scratch, as it were — a predicament that the Romantics too would confront — Herder allowed the value of the classical myths to modern writers as models of allegorizing and even as sources of imagery:

In short, we want to study the mythology of the ancients as poetic heuristics [*Poetische Heuristik*] in order to become the inventors of a mythology

⁵ Herder, 'Vom neuern Gebrauch der Mythologie', in *Werke in zehn Bänden*, ed. Ulrich Gaier et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985–2000), i. 432–55, at 447. The essay was published in the third part of Herder's collection *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur*, commonly known as the *Fragmente*. The *Scienza nuova* is not mentioned in Herder's works before 1797 (in the 115th *Letter for the Advancement of Humanity*), and the extent of its relevance to him is disputed: see e.g. Robert T. Clark, Jr., *Herder: His Life and Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 31, 381; Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976), 147; Heinz Gockel, *Mythos und Poesie: Zum Mythosbegriff in Aufklärung und Frühromantik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1981), 92; and Wolfgang Pross, 'Herder und Vico: Wissenschaftssoziologische Voraussetzungen des historischen Denkens', in Gerhard Sauder (ed.), *Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803)* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1987), 88–113. Herder acknowledged the influence of Thomas Blackwell's *Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735) and *Letters concerning Mythology* (1748), and later of Robert Wood's *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer* (1769), on his understanding of the ethnic specificity of Greek mythology.

ourselves…. . But since this inventive art presupposes two powers that are rarely present together, and often work against each other, namely the reductive faculty and the creative faculty, the philosopher's analysing and the poet's synthesizing, there are many difficulties to our creating an entirely new mythology; but knowing how to discover one for ourselves, as it were, from the ancients' world of images is easier—that distinguishes the poet as something above a mere imitator. Let us apply the ancient images and stories [*Geschichte*] to more recent events. [6]

Although he might have argued that a mythology, by virtue of the social ends it serves, is no less essential in an enlightened age than it was in antiquity—an argument that would have been consistent with his criticism of contemporary philosophy for failing, in its devotion to logic on the one hand and metaphysics on the other, to make itself socially useful—Herder chose here to emphasize the discontinuity of content between the existing old and prospective new mythologies rather than their continuity of function.[7] But in so doing he deprived himself of an effective rejoinder to critics who dismissed myths as 'chimeras, delusions, and absurdities' irrelevant to modern man.[8] ('On the Modern Use of Mythology' was directed specifically against the antiquarian Christian Adolf Klotz's *Epistolae Homericae* (1764), which sought to warn poets off the classical myths, but the prejudice to which Klotz gave renewed and singularly cumbersome expression was widespread and had already been articulated more eloquently and cogently elsewhere, most notably by Bayle, Fontenelle, the abbé Pluche, and Hume.) To forestall the objection that creating a new mythology would entail reverting to an immature, benighted

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[6] Herder, 'Vom neuern Gebrauch der Mythologie', in *Werke*, i. 449–50.

[7] Herder's critique of philosophy is sketched in the posthumously published essay 'Wie die Philosophie zum Besten des Volks allgemeiner und nützlicher werden kann' (written 1765), in *Werke*, i. 101–34. Without specifying that philosophy must become mythological to belong to the people (*das Volk*), Herder, citing Blackwell, notes that in the earliest days of the Greek and Roman republics writers and common people alike used a single language, that of poetry (p. 133). On the philosophical context and significance of this essay see John Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 172–7.

[8] Fontenelle, *De l'origine des fables* (1724), in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Alain Niderst (Paris: Fayard, 1989–2001), iii. 187–202, at 187. For a survey of Enlightenment attitudes to mythology, see the excellent anthology by Burton Feldman and R. D. Richardson, *The Rise of Modern Mythology, 1680–1860* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972).

intellectual state from which reason and true religion were supposed
to have liberated Western man irrevocably, Herder conceded that
a mythology must serve the moderns, in contradistinction to the
ancients, only as 'a means, not as an end'—which is to say, 'to explain
[*erklären*] a perception, a discovery, an event with poetic plausibility
and poetic beauty' through images, characters, and stories from the
classical myths.[9] Not having found a way to reconcile imagination with
reason, he was compelled to confine the prospective new mythology
to the role of allegorizing subjects that could equally be presented
without a mythological framework. Such a literary form, precisely
by being strictly and self-consciously literary, would have invited
the same charge of superfluity that had already been levelled against
classical mythology. Small wonder, then, that his project remained
unrealized except to a very limited extent in his own *Paramythien* of
the 1780s, short moral fables modelled explicitly on Lessing's and of
little traceable contemporary impact.[10]

Yet however restricted its historical influence, Herder's proposal
for a new mythology expressed a need that continued to be felt into
the nineteenth century. Two assertions made in 'On the Modern
Use of Mythology', that mythology fostered social identity and that
it could conceivably be created anew in and for the modern age,
would become the fundamental presuppositions of the early German
Romantic scheme of a new mythology, first formulated in 1796—the
same year that Herder himself would offer in 'Iduna', a dialogue
contributed to Schiller's periodical *Die Horen*, what amounted to
a functionalist defence of mythology. While still conceiving the
creation of a mythology as a literary project, he could now, owing to
two decisive personal experiences—his journey by ship from Riga to
Nantes in 1769 and his encounter with the classicist Christian Gottlob
Heyne in Göttingen in 1772—reconcile imagination with reason.

A receptiveness to Heyne's conception of myths as *philosophemes*,
or proto-philosophical causal explanations of natural phenomena,
formed before language and reason had developed sufficiently to

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[9] Herder, 'Vom neuern Gebrauch der Mythologie', *Werke*, i. 445, 453.
[10] Herder, *Werke*, iii. 695–749 (text), 1353–1407 (commentary). Cf. Strich,
Mythologie, i. 162–6; Gockel, *Mythos und Poesie*, 115–17; and Christoph Jamme,
Eine Einführung in die Philosophie des Mythos: Neuzeit und Gegenwart (Darmstadt:
Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 30.

permit abstract thinking, is evident in Herder's *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Humanity* (1784–91), in which he defined mythology as a primitive 'philosophical effort', reflecting 'the distinctive way in which each people views nature'.[11] Cosmogonies, including the Bible's, were therefore to be understood not as historical or theological documents, with the concomitant expectation of learning something true about the world or God, but rather 'as philosophy and poetry, as a kind of mythology', for they exemplified early humanity's need to establish a sustainably tolerable psychological relation to nature.[12] But insofar as this relatively capacious definition of mythology still assumed an intellectual progression in human development from mythical to rational thought, it hardly acknowledged Herder's earlier experience on the sea, when he discovered the subjective applicability of Hume's genetic explanation of mythology as originating in fearful or hopeful reactions to the external world.[13] Greek mythology had become comprehensible to him as an expression of the same feelings of terror and relief he himself felt as a traveller, and as an interpretation of the same signs he learned to recognize in natural phenomena. In all the superstitions, yarns, and habits of present-day sailors, he had noted in his journal of the voyage,

lie the data for explaining the earliest mythological age, since anyone ignorant of nature then listened, and had to listen, for signs. For sailors coming to Greece and not knowing the waters, a bird's flight was a solemn matter, as

[11] Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, pt. 2, bk. 8, in *Werke*, vi. 301. Cf. Heyne, 'De caussis fabularum seu mythorum physicis' (1764), in *Opuscula academica collecta* (Göttingen, 1785–1812), i. 184–206; and Fritz Graf, 'Die Entstehung des Mythosbegriffs bei Christian Gottlob Heyne', in *idem* (ed.), *Mythos in mythenloser Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1993), 284–94. On Heyne's significance in the development of classical studies in Germany, see Martin Vöhler, 'Christian Gottlob Heyne und das Studium des Altertums in Deutschland', in G. W. Most (ed.), *Disciplining Classics/Altertumswissenschaft als Beruf* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 39–54. Among those who attended Heyne's lectures were the Schlegel and Humboldt brothers, Ludwig Tieck, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, the classicists Friedrich August Wolf, Johann Heinrich Voss, and Friedrich Creuzer, the medievalist Karl Lachmann, and quite possibly (in March 1798) Coleridge.

[12] Herder, 'Unterhaltungen und Briefe über die älteste Urkunde' (1771–2), in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin, 1877–1913), vi. 187.

[13] Cf. Hume, *The Natural History of Religion* (1757), in *Principle Writings on Religion*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 134–96, esp. 134–44. Herder's familiarity with Hume's treatise is demonstrated by an extract he copied from it (reprinted in *Sämmtliche Werke*, xxxii. 193–7).

in truth it still is in the vast expanse of the sky and on the desolate sea. Jupiter's lightning bolt was terrifying, as it still is on the sea… . With what reverence wouldn't one have worshipped the silent silver moon, which stands so vast and alone and has such a powerful effect on the sky, the sea, and the seasons?[14]

In the years following that sea voyage in which his 'historical interest [in mythology] turned into an existential one', Herder increasingly identified mythology with a symbolic view of nature and poetic imagination with mythic consciousness.[15] But it was only in 'Iduna' that Herder gave full expression to his conviction of the inherence and permanence of myth-making in human thought. Renewing his old call for a distinctive national mythology, he assigned his spokesman Alfred an alternative to allegorizing or historicizing interpretations of mythology. Myth-making is neither opposed to nor antecedent to reasoning, Alfred explains to Frey, his sceptical interlocutor, but is always inseparable from and essential to it. *Pace* Frey, myth cannot therefore be distinguished from truth as clothing can be from the body:

I would not have an objection if we were organized differently, but we are what we are, *humans*. Our reason develops only *through fictions* [*durch Fiktionen*]… . Without poiesis [*Dichtung*] we simply cannot exist; a child is never happier than when he *uses his imagination* [*imaginiert*] and casts himself poetically [*dichtet*] into unfamiliar situations and as unfamiliar persons. Throughout life we remain such children; the happiness of our being consists only in the *poeticizing of the soul* [*Dichten der Seele*], supported by *understanding* [*Verstande*], ordered by *reason* [*geordnet von der Vernunft*].[16]

If that is the case, however, then why does Herder allow Alfred to call myths 'fictions', implying their lack of veracity? Since he identifies concepts and myths by virtue of the process of their formation in mental associations and syntheses, he need not be concerned with the criteria of truthfulness by which their content may be judged: 'We always seek and create for ourselves a *unity in multiplicity* [*Eins in Vielen*] and mould it into a *form* [*Gestalt*], whence *concepts, ideas, ideals* develop. If we use them incorrectly, or even if we grow

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[14] Herder, *Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769*, in *Werke*, ix/2. 22–3.

[15] Gockel, *Mythos und Poesie*, 125, 149–52.

[16] Herder, 'Iduna: oder der Apfel der Verjüngung', in *Werke*, viii. 156–7 (emphases in original).

accustomed to *configure them incorrectly* [*falsch zu konfigurieren*], the fault lies in us, not in the matter itself [*an der Sache*].'[17] By presenting reason as a product of the synthesizing imagination, Alfred effectively denies that it can be what his designation 'fiction' stubbornly assumes it is, an independent capacity for judging the content of myths. If he—or rather, if his creator—does not realize this contradiction, it is perhaps because the defensiveness to which he impelled by the dialogic structure of 'Iduna' prevents him from differentiating adequately the anthropological function of myth, the cultural need for a mythology, and the literary form of the imagined new mythology.

In his latest as in his earliest proposal for a mythology, Herder proved unable entirely to free himself from an early Enlightenment condescension towards myth, a fact that would be more readily interpretable as a personal limitation than as a cultural symptom if either proposal had been realized in its day, or even found a responsive audience. But because the new mythology, whether in Herder's conception or (as we shall see) in the early Romantics', was supposed to be the manifestation and hence confirmation of exactly the condition whose realization it was meant to foster, it could not become have possible—except as an allegory of concepts, the form to which it was by definition irreducible—until it was no longer needed.

A specifically Romantic project of a new mythology was first articulated in a document that has been known since its publication in 1917 as the 'Ältestes Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus', or 'Oldest Programme for a System of German Idealism'. Discovered by Franz Rosenzweig in a Berlin archive in 1913 (and rediscovered in a Polish archive in 1979 after having gone missing in 1945), the manuscript is written on two sides of a single folio sheet. Beginning in mid-sentence, it is obviously a fragment, but its original length cannot be determined and no contemporary references to it are known. That the manuscript is in Hegel's hand is universally agreed, and that it dates from 1796–7 is almost universally agreed; but that is where agreement ends. When Rosenzweig published the document, assigning it its misleading but enduring title, he argued that the true author was not Hegel but

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[17] Ibid. 156 (emphases in original). Cf. Manfred Frank, *Der kommende Gott: Vorlesungen über die neue Mythologie* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1982), 145.

Schelling, whose letters of 1796 announced his intention to occupy himself with two topics mentioned in the 'Systemprogramm', ethics and philosophical education.[18] Rival claims of authorship were later advanced on behalf of Hölderlin and Hegel, who had been Schelling's classmates at Tübingen's Lutheran seminary from 1790 to 1793 and were in intermittent contact with one another and with Schelling from 1795 to 1797. Indeed the document has been republished in editions of all three putative authors as if each were the sole author.[19] But as we are concerned here principally with the relation of the new mythology to the symbol in Romantic thought, we need not be detained by the question of the authorship of the 'Systemprogramm'.

Like (and almost certainly in awareness of) Schiller in the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), the author of the 'Systemprogramm' proposes a revolution in thought as a prerequisite to a transformation of the socio-political order.[20] Proceeding from the Kantian foundation of morality on the assumption of individual freedom, hence the claim that 'the conception of myself as an absolutely free being' is the first principle of a complete ethical system, he addresses himself implicitly to the difficulty of justifying

[18] Rosenzweig, 'Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus: Ein handschriftlicher Fund', *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, philos.-histor. Klasse*, Jg. 1917, Abh. 5; reprinted in Christoph Jamme and Helmut Schneider (eds.), *Mythologie der Vernunft: Hegels 'ältestes Systemprogramm' des deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1984), 79–125. Could Schelling have been referring to the 'Systemprogramm' in a cryptic footnote of 1800 in which he mentioned the 'further explanation' of the idea of a new mythology in 'a treatise *On Mythology*, composed several years ago' (*SW* iii. 629 n.)?

[19] The extensive body of German scholarship on the fragment up to the mid-1980s is exhaustively (and exhaustingly) surveyed by Frank-Peter Hansen, *'Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus': Rezeptionsgeschichte und Interpretation* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 19–343; the debate about its authorship, which will remain unresolvable unless new evidence comes to light, is more conveniently summarized by Jamme and Schneider, *Mythologie der Vernunft*, 63–76. David Farrell Krell, the first chapter of whose *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005) offers the most recent and comprehensive anglophone commentary on the fragment (accompanied by a translation), has impishly suggested that the most probable author of the fragment is none of the usual suspects but Nietzsche, who after all claimed to have been born posthumously.

[20] See the Appendix for my complete translation of the 'Systemprogramm'. Jamme and Schneider include a facsimile and transcript of the manuscript in *Mythologie der Vernunft*, 8–14.

this assumption of noumenal freedom (i.e. freedom from the causal determinism of the phenomenal world) in the face of Kant's denial that there can be a theoretical knowledge of noumena. To answer its own question, 'How must a world be constituted for a moral being?', the 'Systemprogramm' must therefore outline the conditions in which freedom will cease to be merely conceivable and instead become actually knowable. Political reform, in the sense of replacing one form of governance with another within the framework of the state, cannot produce the experience of freedom, for the state as such is a kind of machine and inherently antithetical to freedom: 'every state must treat free people as mechanical gears … hence it should *cease to be*.' What a machine lacks is a governing idea in which each part participates while retaining an individual identity and integrity. Implicitly opposed to this mechanistic conception of the state, which had been anticipated by Adam Ferguson's critique of industrialization and become something of an Enlightenment commonplace, is an organicist conception of society deriving, as Manfred Frank notes, from Rousseau and from Shaftesbury, the latter of whom maintained 'that in the organism every part is a direct symbol of the whole or a specific variant of this whole', and the purpose of the whole is therefore also the purpose of each part.[21] But how is this desideratum to be realized?

[21] Mechanical society: Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of the Civil Society* (1767), 4. 1, ed. Duncan Forbes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), 183: 'Manufactures… prosper most, where the mind is least consulted, and where the workshop may, without any great effort of imagination, be considered as an engine, the parts of which are men.' Organic state: Frank, *Der kommende Gott*, 155–6, 172–4. Cf. Rousseau, *Contrat social*, 1. 6 and 2. 7, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Gallimard, 1959–95), iii. 361, 381; and Shaftesbury, *The Moralists, A Philosophical Rhapsody*, 2. 4–5 and 3. 1, in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Philp Ayre (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), ii. 51–68, 75–6, 84–5. On Shaftesbury's organicist social theory see Panajotis Kondylis, *Die Aufklärung im Rahmen des neuzeitlichen Rationalismus* (1981; Munich: DTV, 1986), 394–7. The view that the perfect society is one in which 'each individual member, by being a means for the whole [*Mittel zum Ganzen*], is simultaneously an end in itself' is repeated by Schelling in the second of his *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums* (1803), *SW* v. 232. How easily the metaphorics of organicism could also serve the purposes of reaction, however, was abundantly clear to Heinrich Heine, who noted that in the years following Napoleon's defeat Joseph Görres 'preached the obscurantism of the Middle Ages according to the view of the natural sciences that the state is only a tree whose organic articulation [*organischen*

The answer lies in the assertion that beauty is the governing idea of morality and society: 'I am now convinced', the author of the 'Systemprogramm' declares, 'that the highest act of reason is, by virtue of encompassing all ideas, an aesthetic act, and that *truth and good*'—i.e. theoretical and practical reason—'are related to one another *only in beauty*.' Moving beyond Kant's qualified claims in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1) that aesthetic judgement might serve to connect the incommensurate domains of knowledge and morality, making moral laws 'real' in the sensible world and reconciling natural laws with moral laws, and (2) that there is an analogy between works of art and nature (considered as a single organism) because both may be judged as purposive, the 'Systemprogramm' imagines the identity of rational idea and empirical object in the aesthetic product. If both nature and art, on account of their purposiveness, must have been produced by free and rational acts, then the aesthetic product realizes freedom in the sensible world—or, in Kantian language, makes it 'intuitable' (*anschaulich*)—and to that extent affirms the possibility of its realization in society as a whole.[22] That is why 'the philosopher must possess as much aesthetic power as the writer' and why the development of 'a physics in the larger sense' (i.e. a philosophical rather than experimental physics) must await the creation of a new and rational mythology.[23] Like (though apparently independently of) Herder's contemporaneous 'Iduna', the 'Systemprogramm' conceives

Gliederung] also requires a trunk, branches, and leaves, all of which are neatly to be found in the hierarchically arranged corporate bodies [*Korporations-Hierarchie*] of the Middle Ages' (*Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (1835), bk. 3, in *Sämtliche Schriften*, gen. ed. Klaus Briegleb (1968–76; Munich: Hanser, 1996), iii. 637).

[22] For fuller expositions of the relation of the 'Systemprogramm' to the third *Critique* and to modern political theory, see Frank, *Der Kommende Gott* 153–87; and Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity from Kant to Nietzsche*, 2nd edn. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 55–63.

[23] The complaint that physics 'paces slowly and laboriously by means of experiment' seems to allude to a footnote in Schiller's thirteenth *Aesthetic Letter*: 'One of the primary reasons our natural sciences make such slow progress is obviously the universal and barely controllable tendency towards teleological judgements in which, as soon as they are used constitutively, foist the determinative faculty on the receptive one' (*Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert Göpfert, 9th edn. (Munich: Hanser, 1993), v. 607 n.). See Jamme and Schneider, *Mythologie der Vernunft*, 55; and Eckart Förster, ' "To Lend Wings to Physics Once Again": Hölderlin and the "Oldest System-Programme of

overcoming philosophical dualism as the means of overcoming social alienation.

In 1800 the Romantic project of a new mythology found public expression. Though lacking the explicit political critique of the 'Systemprogramm', the proposals presented in Friedrich Schlegel's *Dialogue on Poetry* and at the end of Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* share with their unpublished predecessor the basic view that the new mythology is to unite reason and the senses, philosophy and art, science and poetry, for the purpose of counteracting intellectual disaggregation and social fragmentation and fostering the development of an enlightened, ethical, free, and organically whole society. While it will serve to guarantee individual freedom, as the 'Systemprogramm' and Schlegel's *Dialogue* emphasize, it cannot be the creation of an isolated individual: instead it will be, the 'Systemprogramm' affirms, 'the last, greatest work of mankind', or, according to Schelling, 'the invention … of a new race, representing, as it were, the universal poet'.[24] Yet all three documents also contain qualifications betraying the recognition that a mythology cannot easily be created at once consciously, collectively, and as it were out of whole cloth. In the 'Systemprogramm' the qualification is confined to a rhetorical gesture in the final sentence of the surviving text, which invokes 'a higher spirit sent from heaven' to institute (*stiften*) the mythology that is supposed to be humanity's greatest achievement, as if an incarnation must have an annunciation. Schelling in 1800 goes further, conceding that the question of 'how a new mythology … might be able to arise is a problem whose solution can be expected only from the future destinies of the world and the further course of history [*allein von den künftigen Schicksalen der Welt und dem weiteren Verlauf der Geschichte*]'.

Hans Blumenberg attributed the difficulty of renewing myth within German Idealism to the fact that German Idealism was itself founded

German Idealism'", *European Journal of Philosophy*, 3 (1995), 174–98. Förster argues that the author of the 'Systemprogramm' (whom he considers to be Hölderlin) made the allusion in order to criticize Schiller from a Goethean perspective, according to which ideas are constitutive and must govern experiments.

[24] Schelling, *System des transcendentalen Idealismus, SW* iii. 629: 'eine neue Mythologie, welche nicht Erfindung des einzelnen Dichters, sondern eines neuen, nur Einen Dichter gleichsam vorstellenden Geschlechts'.

on a myth. Not any myth, moreover, but the—or rather *a*—final myth, which sought to exhaust the need for myth, and hence complete the work of enlightenment, by removing all doubt and anxiety from the subject's experience of the world: 'That a story must be told about the mind, a story that can be gleaned only vaguely from the actual history of ideas, is a part of the attempt to overcome the distress of contingency in the self-consciousness of the modern age.'[25] In this story the cognitive subject asserts its own responsibility for and authority over the object of cognition. As Blumenberg noted, 'it is an unprovable story, a story without witnesses, but with the highest quality that philosophers have ever been able to offer: irrefutability.'[26]

We may easily spell out what follows from this line of argumentation, as far as the idea of a philosophical mythology is concerned. To propose the aestheticization of philosophy is strictly redundant when the most radical aestheticization of philosophy imaginable has already been accomplished in the foundational myth of German Idealism. Why should something done behind the closed doors of austere abstraction need to be redone in the public square of aesthetic interest, that open space where, in the words of the 'Systemprogramm', 'enlightened and unenlightened finally shake hands'? That a new mythology nonetheless *was* proposed, and precisely by those identified with German Idealism, therefore remains inexplicable in Blumenberg's account, which is fairly conventional in taking the early Fichte's subjective idealism as the model for the whole of German Idealism, notwithstanding the rejection of that model by the Romantics in favour of a so-called absolute idealism, which entails a greater realism and naturalism because it posits nature's existence as independent of consciousness and yet retains a high valuation of self-consciousness as nature's goal and highest stage of development.[27]

Had 'intellectual intuition' (*intellektuelle Anschauung*), defined by Fichte as 'the immediate consciousness that I act and of my actions

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[25] Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (1979; Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1984), 618–19: 'Daß vom Geist eine Geschichte erzählt werden muß, die aus der faktischen Geistesgeschichte nur ungenau erahnt werden kann, ist auch ein Stück des Versuchs, die Kontingenzbedrängnis im neuzeitlichen Selbstbewußtsein zu überwinden.'

[26] Ibid. 297–8.

[27] Cf. Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[*dass ich handle, und was ich handle*] … a faculty whose existence cannot be demonstrated through concepts and whose content [*was es sey*] cannot be developed through concepts', proved an adequate solution to the problem of philosophical dualism, guaranteeing the reality of freedom and confirming the unity of subject and object, a new mythology might never have seemed necessary to the early Romantics.[28] But just as the author of the 'Systemprogramm' was not content with 'the conception *of myself* as an absolutely free being' and sought empirical confirmation of such freedom in an aesthetic act, so Schelling (if he was not himself the author of the 'Systemprogramm') grew dissatisfied with Fichtean idealism and appealed to aesthetics to invest intellectual intuition with metaphysical significance, as the subject's knowledge of its unity with nature. In the aesthetic object, because it is objective, the subject recognizes what remains inaccessible to it in reflection, that 'absolute' or 'primordial self' (*Urselbst*) in which the pre-established harmony of subject and object, of consciousness and unconsciousness, is grounded:

If aesthetic intuition is merely intellectual intuition become objective, then it follows that art is the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy, which constantly records anew what philosophy cannot represent outwardly, namely the unconscious aspect of acting and producing, and its original identity with the conscious. Art is therefore the highest achievement to the philosopher because it opens to him the holy of holies, so to speak, where that which divided in nature and history burn, as if in a single flame, in eternal and original unity.[29]

[28] Fichte, 'Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre' (1797), in *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Reinhard Lauth and Hans Gliwitzky (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1962–), i/4. 209–69, at 217. In accordance with his definition of knowledge as conceptual and empirical, Kant of course denied the possibility of intellectual intuition: see, e.g. the *Critique of Pure Reason*, B68.

[29] Schelling, *System des transcendentalen Idealismus, SW*, iii. 615 and n. 3, 627–8: 'Wenn die ästhetische Anschauung nur die objektiv gewordene intellektuelle ist, so versteht sich von selbst, daß die Kunst das einzige wahre und ewige Organon und Document der Philosophie sey, welches immer und fortwährend aufs neue beurkundet, was die Philosophie äußerlich nicht darstellen kann, nämlich das Bewußtlose im Handeln und Produciren und seine ursprüngliche Identität mit dem Bewußtsein. Die Kunst ist deswegen dem Philosophen das Höchste, weil sie ihm das Alleheiligste gleichsam öffnet, wo in ewiger und ursprünglicher Vereinigung gleichsam in Einer Flamme brennt, was in der Natur und Geschichte gesondert ist. ' (The first sentence incorporates Schelling's correction of 'transcendentale' to 'intellektuelle'.) On the differences

Since the purpose of intellectual intuition in the first place was to ground transcendental philosophy in a non-discursive act of self-knowing—an act in which there is no distinction between knowing subject and known object—Schelling's notion of an objectified intellectual intuition (as noted in Chapter 3) is both paradoxical and revealing. While the attraction of intellectual intuition was its non-discursiveness, that of mythology was, or was supposed to be, its objectivity. Distorting Fichte's epistemological expedient almost beyond recognition, Schelling pressed it into service as the theoretical grounding of the content of his envisioned new mythology, with which he hoped to dispel the doubts that even the self-knowing subject may have about the world. In his subsequent lectures on art (1802–3) and on the 'system of complete philosophy' (1804), Schelling identified that content explicitly with a symbolism both *of* and *in* organic nature, in which every finite thing is a mode of the infinite absolute: 'All symbolism must come from and return to nature. The things of nature [*Dinge der Natur*] simultaneously signify and exist [*bedeuten zugleich und sind*] … A true symbolic material [*Stoff*] exists only in *mythology*, but mythology itself is originally possible only through the relation of its forms to nature.'[30]

A similar reaction against subjective idealism is evident in Friedrich Schlegel's insistence that the new mythology will be the expression of the dialectic of idealism and 'a new and equally unbounded realism'.[31] While the new mythology, in contrast to the old, 'can emerge only by its own effort out of the deepest depths of the spirit [*des Geistes*]'—that is, out of absolute idealism, 'the great phenomenon of the age' and 'anchoring point' of man's intellectual powers—subjective idealism

between Fichte's and Schelling's interpretations of intellectual intuition, see Rolf-Peter Horstmann, 'The Early Philosophy of Fichte and Schelling', in Karl Ameriks (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 117–40, at 133–4; and Beiser, *German Idealism*, 580–5.

[30] Schelling, *System der gesammten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere*, §319, *SW* vi. 571–2; cf. *Philosophie der Kunst*, §42, *SW* v. 414–51. The first sentence of the quotation recalls Schelling's conclusion in the *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* that philosophy and all the sciences emerged from and will return to a 'universal poetry' (*SW* iii. 629).

[31] Schlegel, *Gespräch über die Poesie, KA* ii. 284–351, at 315–17 (for all the quotations in this paragraph). Further references to this dialogue will be included parenthetically in the text.

is itself 'only a part, a branch, a mode of expression [*Äußerungsart*] of the phenomenon of all phenomena'. A corresponding realism is needed to achieve the 'harmony of the ideal and the real' in which absolute idealism consists. For Schlegel's Ludoviko, as for Schelling and the author of the 'Systemprogramm', speculative physics, despite its promise, cannot yet supply the requisite realism because it needs first to be rejuvenated *by* the new mythology: what it lacks at present is precisely 'a mythological view of nature' made possible by the subject's comprehension of its relation to the absolute. Hence, once again, the resort to the aesthetic: 'I too have long borne within me the ideal of such a realism, and if it has not yet found expression the reason is merely that I am still seeking an organ for communicating it. Yet I know that I can find it only in poetry [*Poesie*], for realism can never again appear in the form of philosophy, not even of systematic philosophy [*eines Systems*].' But this opposition of disciplines or discursive modes is not so categorical that the poet can afford to ignore philosophy altogether. On the contrary, in relating the finite to the infinite, the individual to the absolute, he should look to Spinoza as his model: 'In fact', Ludoviko avers, 'I scarcely conceive how one can be a poet without admiring and loving Spinoza and becoming entirely his [*ganz der seinige zu werden*].… In Spinoza you will find the beginning and the end of all imagination [*Fantasie*], the universal basis and ground on which everything individual of yours rests.' So if realism is to emerge from the lap of idealism, as Ludoviko puts it, then poetry must collapse in the lap of Spinozism. An absolute ego needs an infinite substance to make itself at home in the world.

Now we are in a better position to understand why the project of the new mythology could not be realized on its own terms—why (in Odo Marquard's terms) talk of the new reverted to talk of the old mythology, or why (in Manfred Frank's terms, and as we shall see presently) the collective project of creating an exoteric mythology succumbed to the individual task of discovering an esoteric symbolism.[32] It was Blumenberg's mistake to have assumed that the

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[32] See Marquard, *Farewell to Matters of Principle: Philosophical Studies*, trans. Robert Wallace (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 97–8; Frank, *Der kommende Gott*, 245–55.

new mythology was supposed to be concerned with the absolute subject, but it would be ours to dismiss out of hand the conclusion that may be abstracted from his assumption: the project of a new mythology foundered as a result of its unacknowledged dependence on a myth. For Marquard the myth in question is not that of the self-objectifying subject but rather 'the most successful myth of the modern world: the myth of the inexorable progress of world history toward freedom, in the form of a philosophy of history based on emancipation'. This conception of history constitutes a *monomyth*, by which term Marquard designates those myths with claims to, or rather demands of, exclusivity: 'I am your only story, you shall have no other stories beside me.'[33] If monotheism—and Christianity in particular—is the first monomyth, abolishing polymythical thinking by substituting a single god for a plurality of gods, then the philosophy of history is the second, in part an answer to the discontents of the first, consolidating multiple stories (*Geschichten*) into singular history (*die Geschichte*), steps forward (*Fortschritte*) into progress (*der Fortschritt*). The monomyth invariably presents itself in the form of a 'myth of the termination of myth'.[34]

According to Marquard, the paradox of the new mythology is that it cannot be created because it already exists, 'as the mythology of the new': that is, in various manifestations of the interpretation of history as immanent rational progress, such as the myth 'of the revolution, of changing the world, of the Reich to come, of the general strike, of the final battle and the final class. In every case, what is in question is a total orientation that is provided by the sole story of the empowerment of the sole power'.[35] Thus when Schelling, whom Marquard assumes to have been the author of the 'Systemprogramm', proclaimed the need for *a* new mythology as the instrument of emancipation and harbinger of the ideal state in which 'universal freedom and equality of spirits' would reign, he was really evincing an unease with *the* new mythology of the modern age, which by its nature disallows the freedom to form alternative stories. As the source of his unease became increasingly clear to him, Marquard argues, Schelling exchanged the hope of a future new mythology for the comfort of the original new mythology, Christianity: his late *Philosophy of Revelation* 'attempts to keep the

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[33] Marquard, *Farewell*, 94.   [34] Ibid. 97.   [35] Ibid. 97–8.

new mythology in its oldest state, so as to possess it as something affirmative'.

But even if he eventually 'returned' to Christianity—a claim that itself must be qualified by the acknowledgement that he maintained a critical detachment from Christian doctrine and conceived the entire history of religion as a progressive revelation of divinity to humanity—Schelling had previously sought to keep the old mythology new so as to possess *it* as something affirmative.[36] Following Herder and Friedrich Schlegel, and in a manner at least comparable to Hölderlin's investment of quasi-messianic hopes in the cultic figure of Dionysus as 'the coming god', still waiting to be released from the madness and exile to which Hera had condemned him, Schelling had interpreted ancient mythology as an historically successful realization of exactly what the new mythology was supposed to be, namely a symbolism of nature in which the absolute is represented '*in the particular* with the absolute indistinction [*Indifferenz*] of the universal and particular'.[37] Marquard himself observes that a self-conscious interest in polymythical thinking (in which Herder and Heyne, as we have seen, preceded the Romantics) developed contemporaneously with and in reaction to the modern monomyth of progress, which is to say that unease with the monomyth attended it from its outset. But that being the case, why was the countermeasure 'outlived by what induced it'?[38] Why, in other words, did the rediscovered old gods prove powerless to assist in the birth of the anticipated new ones?

Marquard's tentative conclusion that the old mythology 'loses its polymythical character by submitting to the monomyth of the

[36] In the 1840s, when lecturing on religion, Schelling made no secret of his critical attitude towards Christian doctrine: 'The harder, the more incomprehensible something is … the more its explanation demands thought. For me it's not a matter of agreeing with any church doctrine [*kirchlichen Lehre*]. I have no interest in being orthodox, as it's called, just as I would have no difficulty in being the opposite. To me Christianity is merely a phenomenon that I'm seeking to *explain*. What the sense, the true meaning of Christianity is must be judged from its genuine documents, just as we sought earlier to determine the meaning of the Dionysian mysteries [*Dionysoslehre*], for example, or any other mythological idea from the best preserved writings' (*Philosophie der Offenbarung,* lect. 31, *SW* xiv. 201).

[37] Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, §39, *SW* v. 406; cf. *Philosophie und Religion* (1804), *SW* vi. 67. Hölderlin refers to Dionysus as *der kommende Gott* in l. 54 of his elegy 'Brod und Wein', to which I shall return at the end of this chapter.

[38] Marquard, *Farewell*, 100.

new' may be restated more decisively as follows: the new mythology envisaged by the early Romantics remained unrealized less because of their unacknowledged dependence on a particular myth than because of their ambivalence towards myth in general. This ambivalence, a consequence not only of their understanding of history, but also of their anxiety about discursive representation, is signalled in the 'Systemprogramm' by the designation of the new mythology as a 'mythology of reason', in Schlegel's *Dialogue* by the assertion that 'it will come to us in a way completely opposite to that of the old, former mythology, which was everywhere the first flowering of youthful imagination' (p. 312), and in Schelling's *Philosophy of Art* by the declaration that the new mythology will be antithetical to the Greek by virtue of its idealist basis.[39] The new mythology was to be free of myths.

At issue here is the simultaneous assumption of opposing conceptions of the relation of myth to reason, one synchronic and the other diachronic. Myth and reason must be synchronically related in a rational mythology and diachronically related in a new mythology. 'Before mythology is rational', the author of the 'Systemprogramm' declares, 'the philosopher must be ashamed of it', the subordinating conjunction *before* sufficing to conjure up the Enlightenment consignment of myth to the pre-rational stage in the phylogenetic history of human thought. What makes the old mythology old, and therefore incapable of 'standing in the service of ideas', as the 'Systemprogramm' puts it, is precisely that it precedes and is superseded by rational enlightenment. And what makes the new mythology new is that it draws its materials from enlightened, hence post-mythical, sources, including Spinozan monism, mathematical physics, liberal political theory, and the philosophical critique of religion—the 'Systemprogramm' for its part being markedly anticlerical, in spite or because of the fact that all three of its possible authors had been seminarians. To be sure, the document's distinction between 'philosophers of the letter' (*Buchstabenphilosophen*), or scholastic philosophers, and 'the philosophy of the spirit' (*die Philosophie des Geistes*) indicates that reason is expected to perform its emancipatory function—emancipation from unreason, that is, or from what amounts to the same thing, a strictly

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[39] Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, §42, *SW* v. 448–9.

instrumentalist reason—only through the alien medium of aesthetic production, that it cannot be true to itself in what Habermas calls 'its own medium of self-reflection'.[40] But if the role of a mythology in reason's self-realization were purely formal, there would be no need to distinguish a new one from an old one, only a mythological form from a rational content. That the new mythology, whatever its source, must be mythological in essence as well as form is accordingly emphasized in the *Philosophy of Art*, where Schelling rejects the allegorization of philosophical or physical concepts in mythological forms, as in Erasmus Darwin's *Botanic Garden* (1789–90).[41]

Schelling's lectures on art are not notable for clarity, but one point they make unambiguously is that mythology is neither allegorical (representing the universal by means of the particular) nor schematic (representing the particular by means of the universal) but symbolic (synthesizing the allegorical and schematic by means of the identity of the particular and the universal).[42] Autonomous and unmotivated, it serves no purpose but its own existence and refers to nothing but itself. This is not to say that mythological figures are meaningless, but rather that they are uninterpretable, for their meaning cannot be expressed discursively: 'Their greatest charm consists in the fact that, merely by *existing* without reference to anything else [*ohne alle Beziehung*], they nonetheless always allow meaning to shine through [*die Bedeutung durchschimmern lassen*].' Creating a new mythology would therefore entail reproducing the incarnational, as opposed to representational, power that Schelling, following Herder (whom he did not acknowledge) and Karl Philipp

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[40] Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 90.

[41] Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, §42, *SW* v. 446–7: 'Käme es nur überhaupt darauf an, Ideen der Philosophie oder höheren Physik durch mythologischen Gestalten zu symbolisieren, so finden sich diese sämmtlich schon in der griechischen Mythologie, so daß ich mich anheischig machen will, die ganze Naturphilosophie in Symbolen der Mythologie darzustellen. Aber dieß wäre doch wieder nur *Gebrauch* (wie bei Darwin).' On Darwin's poem, in which the verses serve as an amusing illustration of the scientific principles elaborated straightforwardly in the prose notes, see Teskey, *Allegory and Violence*, 107–12.

[42] *Philosophie der Kunst*, §39, *SW* v. 411: 'Als ein nothwendiger *Folgesatz* geht nun aus dieser ganzen Untersuchung hervor: die Mythologie überhaupt und jede Dichtung derselben insbesondere ist weder schematisch noch allegorisch, sondern *symbolisch* zu begreifen.'

Moritz (whom he did), attributed to ancient Greek mythology. 'The demand of a mythology', he warned, 'is indeed precisely *not* that its symbols merely signify ideas, but rather that they be independent beings [*Wesen*], significant in themselves.'[43]

Since an intense identification with ancient Greece had become common among German intellectuals after Winckelmann, with the scholarly support of Heyne's seminar in Göttingen and the literary support of Goethe's circle in Weimar, and would soon become the basis of Wilhelm von Humboldt's educational programme in Prussia, it would be surprising if the youthful Schelling and Friedrich Schlegel had not looked longingly to Greek mythology for evidence of the kind of 'symbolic language' they thought necessary to counteract the 'spiritual sickness' afflicting their own age, a sickness that, according to Schelling, had originated in man's alienation from nature and deprived him of his sense of freedom.[44] Schlegel's observation, 'In the

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[43] *Philosophie der Kunst*, §42, *SW* v. 447. Cf. Herder, *Plastik: Einige Wahrnehmungen über Form und Gestalt aus Pygmalions bildendem Traume* (1778), in *Werke*, iv. 320–1; and Moritz, *Götterlehre, oder Mythologische Dichtungen der Alten* (1791), in *Schriften zur Ästhetik und Poetik*, ed. Hans Joachim Schrimpf (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962), 196–7: 'To seek to transform the ancient stories of the gods [*die Göttergeschichte der Alten*] through all sorts of interpretations into mere allegories is just as foolish an endeavour as seeking to change them through all sorts of forced explanations into straightforward, true history [*in lauter wahre Geschichte*]…. In the realm of imagination [*Phantasie*] the concept *Jupiter* means *in the first place* itself, just as in the realm of real things the concept *Caesar* means the Caesar himself…. A genuine artwork, a charming poem is something complete and perfect in itself [*etwas in sich Fertiges und Vollendetes*], which exists for its own sake and whose value resides in itself and the well-ordered relation of its parts, whereas mere hieroglyphs or cyphers [*Buchstaben*] can be as shapeless as they please when their only purpose is to give a sign [*bezeichnen*] of what one is supposed to think of in connection with them.' Schelling credited Moritz with being the first to recognize mythology's 'poetic absoluteness' (§39, *SW* v. 412), and Xavier Tilliette notes many specific 'parallelisms' between the *Philosophie der Kunst* and Moritz's *Götterlehre* (*La Mythologie comprise: L'interprétation schellingienne du paganisme* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1984), 129–30).

[44] Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797), *SW* ii. 47, 12–14. Cf. Schlegel, 'Vom ästhetischen Werte der griechischen Komödie' and 'Über die weiblichen Charaktere in den griechischen Dichtern' (both 1794), *KA* i. 23–4, 46 (on the Greeks' recognition of man's 'unlimited autonomy'). On this subject see also Henry Hatfield, *Aesthetic Paganism in German Literature from Winckelmann to the Death of Goethe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 164–81; and Jochen Fried, *Die Symbolik des Realen: Über alte und neue Mythologie in der Frühromantik* (Munich: Fink, 1985), 54–60.

absence of nature, I have long loved the ancients', certainly implies that he himself recognized a compensatory dimension to his interest in classical antiquity.[45] And indeed, even while insisting that the new mythology must be created out of idealism and modern physics, his spokesman Ludoviko claims that there is no better symbol of it, as an expression of organic harmony, than 'the motley crew of old gods' (p. 319). With respect to Schelling, the transition that Marquard notes from the philosopher who 'proclaimed the new mythology [to] the philosopher … of the altogether old mythology' is in a sense already implicit within the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, where Schelling avers that 'it is not difficult to say what the medium [*Mittelglied*] of the return of science to poetry will be, for such a medium existed in mythology'—precisely the old one.[46] In the *Dialogue on Poetry* Schlegel compresses a similar thought into a question: 'Why shouldn't what has already existed come into being anew?' (p. 313).

Yet the question was not purely rhetorical. For both Schlegel and Schelling were too conscious of the historical differences between antiquity and modernity, and too accepting of the modern monomyth of immanent human progress, to imagine more than a functional identity between the actual old and potential new mythologies, as socially cohesive expressions of humanity's moral autonomy and nature's inherent meaningfulness. When he revised the *Dialogue on Poetry* for his collected works in 1823, Schlegel not only made the identification of mythology with symbolism more explicit, repeatedly inserting such phrases as *symbolische Anschauung* and *symbolische Naturansicht* as modifiers of *Mythologie*, but he also added a paragraph acknowledging the difficulty of creating a modern mythology in the absence of the conditions that had given rise to Greek mythology:

This is the thread linking natural philosophy to mythology, and hence also to art, as symbolic representation [*Darstellung*]. But if great obstacles still stand in the way of representing in poetry a new symbolic world of our perceptions of nature [*Darstellung einer neuen symbolischen Welt von Naturanschauungen in der Poesie*], and difficult problems remain to be solved before the goal

[45] Schlegel, *Fragmente zur Poesie und Litteratur II* (*c*.1799–1801), p. 59, no. 519, *KA* xvi. 297.

[46] Maquard, *Farewell*, 98 (referring specifically to the contrast between Schelling's early writings and the late, posthumously published lectures on mythology); Schelling, *System des Transcendentalism Idealismus, SW* iii. 629.

can be reached, we may look forward with certainty to a rich and fortunate development for all symbolic understanding in nature itself and in the entire sphere of old and new mythology.[47]

Two decades after having been first proposed publicly, the new mythology still lay in the indefinite future.

The obstacles to its realization likewise concerned Schelling, whose point of departure was Schlegel's distinction, elaborated in 'On the Study of Greek Poetry' (1797), between classical art's objectivity, completeness, and self-sufficiency and modern art's individuality, indeterminateness, and endless striving for perfection. But unlike Schlegel, Schelling sought to accommodate that historical antithesis to the typological antithesis of symbol and allegory, thereby compounding the difficulty of explaining how a mythology could be at once symbolic and modern.[48] In his lectures on academic studies (delivered in 1802) as well as on art, he taught that whereas Greek mythology, a 'closed world of symbols' in which ideas cannot be understood except as the gods themselves, subordinates the infinite to the finite in fusing the ideal with the real, Christianity, 'whose ruling principle is the infinite', reverses the classical hierarchy and consequently severs the connection between divinity and nature. Because it conceives the finite strictly as representing the infinite, rather than as simultaneously existing for its own sake and symbolizing the infinite, Christianity experiences divinity not in nature but in history, not as the simultaneous existence of multiple gods but as the successive revelation of the single God—a distinction introduced to a larger public by Schelling's disciple Friedrich Ast in his contemporaneous *System of Aesthetics*.[49] If a grounding in nature makes Greek religion

[47] *Gespräch*, 321 n. 1. In his lectures of 1800–1 on transcendental philosophy, Schlegel had stated that 'in every mythology is a symbolism of nature and of love; the individual, the human is particularly noticeable therein. Humanity finds complete expression in mythology' (*KA* xii. 62).

[48] Bengt Algot Sørensen, *Symbol und Symbolismus in den ästhetischen Theorien des 18. Jahrhunderts und der deutschen Romantik* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1963), 259.

[49] Schelling, *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums* (1803), lect. 8, *SW* v. 286–95, at 287–8 and 292; cf. *Philosophie der Kunst*, §42, *SW* v. 418–51; and Ast, *System der Kunstlehre* (Leipzig, 1805), 62–4 (reprinted in Bengt Algot Sørensen (ed.), *Allegorie und Symbol: Texte zur Theorie des dichterischen Bildes im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a.M.: Athenäum, 1972), 199–200). Here Schelling departed implicitly (and in §39 of the *Philosophie der Kunst, SW* v. 409–10, explicitly)

symbolic, then a detachment from nature makes Christianity (which for Schelling, as for Schlegel, is synonymous in this context with modernity) allegorical. Even artists of genius, whether they want to or not, conform to the character of their epoch, as Schelling, obviously troubled by labelling allegorical a writer he admired, elaborated in an essay on Dante: 'Representating philosophical and theological ideas in symbols was impossible, for no symbolic mythology was available…. He must be allegorical, and is so even against his will, because he cannot be symbolic.'[50]

That the allegorical character of Christianity/modernity was hardly condusive to the creation of a new mythology did not escape Schelling's notice, and in the *Philosophy of Art* he remarked coyly, 'Since the ancient mythology refers everywhere to nature and is a symbolism of nature, it must interest us to see how in the modern mythology, with its complete contrast to the ancient, the connection [*Beziehung*] to nature will express itself.'[51] In fact this was not the only respect in which he conceived the age to be antithetical to classical antiquity, and hence to mythology: another was its individualism. 'Just as the ancient world was in general the world of types [*Gattungen*], so the modern is one of individuals.'[52] Even as he claimed, trying to make a virtue of unavoidability, that now 'every truly creative individual has to create his own mythology', contributing according to his own abilities and perspective to an evolving total mythology—as Dante had done—Schelling continued to maintain in his lectures on art, as he had in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, that mythology

from Heyne's explanation of myth, an explanation he had affirmed in his master's thesis 'Ueber Mythen, historische Sagen und Philosopheme der ältesten Welt' (1793), *SW* i. 41–83, on which see Gockel, *Mythos und Poesie*, 54–8. A decade after Schelling and Ast, K. W. F. Solger also associated the symbol with classical antiquity and allegory with Christianity (*Erwin: Vier Gespräche über das Schöne und die Kunst*, ed. Rudolf Kurtz (Berlin: Wiegandt & Grieben, 1907), 301).

[50] 'Über Dante in philosophischer Beziehung' (1803), *SW* v. 152–64, at 155–6. A version of this essay was incorporated into the *Philosophie der Kunst, SW* v. 687–93. As if in terror of insufficient contradiction between his typological and historical schemata, Schelling also insisted that images of Christian saints such as Mary Magdalen and Cecilia were symbolic, not allegorical, because those depicted had been living persons (*Philosophie der Kunst*, §87, *SW* v. 555; and cf. Ch. 1 above at n. 8).

[51] *Philosophie der Kunst*, §42, *SW* v. 449.

[52] 'Über Dante in philosophischer Beziehung', *SW* v. 154.

as such 'can be the work neither of individual people nor of the race or species [*des Geschlechts oder der Gattung*] (insofar as this is merely an aggregate of individuals), but solely of the race insofar as it is itself an individual and equivalent to a single person [*einem einzelnen Menschen gleich*]'.[53]

Consequently, he sought to qualify the expectation, raised in Schlegel's *Dialogue*, that speculative physics would supply the content of the new mythology. Of course an individual might translate physical concepts into a mythological form, but the result would not be a genuine mythology, merely an allegory in the manner of Darwin. Only if the foundation of *Naturphilosophie*, the 'intuition of the infinite in the finite … in a universally valid and scientifically objective manner'—a point of distinction from Christianity and of affinity with ancient mythology—were accepted throughout society could it contribute, and even then but indirectly, to the creation of the new mythology. Trying to insinuate a mythology into society through physics would be no more effective than trying to 'impose the realistic mythology of the Greeks on Christian culture'.[54] When he informed his students in Würzburg in 1804 that 'the rebirth of a symbolic understanding of nature would be the first step towards the re-establishment of a true mythology', Schelling implied that individual artistic efforts could hope to be assimilated eventually into a collective mythology only if they were grounded from the outset in what he had

[53] *Philosophie der Kunst*, §42, *SW* v. 445–7, 414, 449. Cf. Peter Szondi, 'Antike und Moderne in der Ästhetik der Goethezeit', in *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie I*, ed. Senta Metz and Hans-Hagen Hildebrandt (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1974), 11–265, at 238–40. In a discussion of 1968 with Odo Marquard, Szondi again emphasized Schelling's analysis of 'the opposition of *ancient* and *modern poetry* with reference to mythology' (Manfred Fuhrmann (ed.), *Mythos und Terror: Probleme der Mythenrezeption* (Munich: Fink, 1971), 640).

[54] *Philosophie der Kunst*, §42, *SW* v. 447–9: 'Naturphilosophie ist gleichfalls Anschauung des Unendlichen im Endlichen, aber auf eine allgemengültige und wissenschaftlich objektive Art. Alle spekulative Philosophie hat nothwendig dieselbe der Richtung des Christenthums engegengesetzte Richtung…. Wer den allgemeinen Typus kennt, nach dem alles geordnet ist und geschieht, wird nicht zweifeln, daß dieser integrante Theil der modernen Bildung die andere Einheit ist, welche das Christenthum als Gegensatz von sich ausschloß, und daß diese Einheit, welchen ein Schauen des Unendlichen im Endlichen ist, in das Ganze derselben aufgenommen werden müsse…. Man muß der christlichen Bildung nicht die realistische Mythologie der Griechen aufdringen wollen…. Nicht *wir* wollen der idealistischen Bildung ihre Götter durch die *Physik* geben.'

referred to in his early *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797) as a 'communal intuition' (*gemeinschaftliche Intuition*).[55] The circularity of his argument is betrayed by his resort to the conditional mood, which is echoed in Manfred Frank's exposition of his argument:

If the realization—the actualization, the incarnation—of ideas has already occurred in nature and philosophers already know of this incarnation, *then* how long poets will wait before expressing in their poems and 'communicating universally', i.e. revealing, the returned ideas, which till now were mysteriously [*mysteriös/mysterienartig*] *hidden* in nature, is merely a question of good will and enthusiasm. This revelation would have the character of that universal symbolism which Schelling had defined as the (new) mythology.[56]

If we translate the conditional into the indicative mood, Schelling's difficulty becomes clear: while the creation of the new mythology requires the prior public recognition of a universal symbolism, the public recognition of a universal symbolism requires the prior existence of the new mythology. The symbolism can be accepted as such only by virtue of its perceived objectivity, and a mythology is the expression of that objectivity. Nature's symbolism and reason's mythology are thus equivalent in their dependence on the very quality whose current absence in the world they are supposed to remedy, that of 'significance', or specifically human meaningfulness, as defined in the first chapter. Because significance cannot be purely subjective or manufactured *ex nihilo*, the recognition of it does entail something like a communal intuition: that is, a body of shared assumptions and perceptions that, precisely by being shared, need not be articulated or explicitly acknowledged in order to perform their social function. Where such intuition is lacking in the first place, the appeal to it in another form—which is what the proposal for a new mythology constituted—can hardly redress its absence.

[55] *System der gesammten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere*, §319, *SW* vi. 572; *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur, SW* ii. 73. Cf. *Philosophie und Religion, SW* vi. 67 ('If you seek a universal mythology, then seize the symbolic understanding of nature, let the gods take possession of you again'); and Schlegel, *Gespräch*, 312 n. 10 (from the 1823 revision of the text: 'We have no mythology, no valid symbolic understanding of nature as the source of imagination [*Fantasie*] and the vital environment of images [*lebendigen Bilder-Umkreis*] for every art').

[56] Frank, *Der kommende Gott*, 248. The phrase 'communicating universally' (*allgemein mitteilen*) is from Schlegel's *Gespräch*, 315.

It was nothing if not prudent, therefore, for Schelling to discourage any expectation that the new mythology might be realized before the 'indeterminably distant' (*unbestimmbar weit entfernt*) future.[57] And even that prospect faded after the Prussian army's capitulation to French forces in 1806, an event that hastened German intellectuals' abandonment of the cosmopolitan aestheticism and (so to speak) liberal communitarianism manifested in the aspiration to a new mythology for an illiberal cultural and political nationalism. The humiliation of the Napoleonic occupation made forming a unified German nation, with a single and effective army, a more compelling and plausible project than contributing hopefully to the eventual appearance of an enlightened mythology. Thus the political state, which had been rejected by the author of the 'Systemprogramm' as an obstacle to freedom and genuine community, was now promoted, not least by such erstwhile supporters of the French Revolution as Fichte and Joseph Görres, as the defender of freedom (from foreign domination, that is) and the guarantor of community (defined as national identity).[58] Carlyle's notion of a culture organized consciously and

[57] Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, §42, *SW* v. 449. Already in 1802 the utopianism of the project of a new mythology was criticized in a dialogue that Clemens Brentano included in his novel *Godwi*: 'A new mythology is impossible, as impossible as an old, for every mythology is eternal. Where a mythology is called old, the people have become base [*gering*]; and those who speak of introducing a so-called new one prophesy a culture [*Bildung*] that we do not have' (*Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Jürgen Behrens et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1975–), xvi. 380).

[58] See Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany 1640–1840* (1964; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 352–4, 386–95; and James Sheehan, *German History 1770–1866* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 371–88. Sheehan notes the necessity of distinguishing cultural and political nationalism among German intellectuals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Though a prominent cultural nationalist, Herder (who died in 1805) was so far from advocating political unification that he favoured the abolition of the bureaucratic state altogether. (On Herder's nationalism see Frederick Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 189–221, esp. 211–12.) It was only in the face of the French incursions into German-speaking lands from 1792 that appeals to the existence of the German nation, based on a common language and literature, began to imply the possibility and desirability of a corresponding political entity—and even then the appeals had limited effect outside intellectual circles. Mindful of their own positions, German princes were wary of pan-German nationalism and generally tolerated the *völkisch* propaganda issuing from such organs as Görres's *Rheinische Merkur* (1814–16) only so long as it served the purposes of the anti-Napoleonic campaign.

unconsciously around symbols, though superficially similar to the idea of the new mythology, was presented less as a vision for the future than as an artefact of the past, attributed to a (fictional) historical figure, Professor Teufelsdröckh, and identified with specific historical conditions, such as the suppression of German peasants in the sixteenth century and of Hungarian nationalism during the reign of Joseph II.[59]

In contrast to Görres and Friedrich Schlegel, Schelling neither sought solace in Roman Catholicism nor became active in reactionary politics, but his philosophical interests did shift increasingly after 1806 towards religious questions, notably those of human freedom, the origin of evil, and God's relation to the world. This shift was signalled decisively in 1809 in the last major work he chose to publish, the *Philosophical Investigations into the Nature of Human Freedom*, in which he appropriated Jacob Böhme's notion of the eternally self-manifesting deity to deflect the polemic against pantheism he perceived to have been directed at himself in Schlegel's *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808).[60] Insofar as the so-called positive philosophy Schelling now undertook to elaborate entailed the speculative reconstruction of what he designated, in *The Ages of the World*, 'the history of the development of the primal being [*des Urwesens*]', it might itself be considered a new mythology—not the one he had envisaged earlier, certainly, and 'not in the sense of a regression to the immediacy of archaic mythology, but in the sense of a recourse to a philosophical myth'.[61] By extending to the

Religious differences and divided loyalties among the various German populations, particularly between Protestant Prussia and the Catholic Rhineland and Bavaria, also complicate discussion of 'German nationalism'.

[59] Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (1833–4), 3. 3, ed. Kerry McSweeney and Peter Sabor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 168.

[60] The most careful and lucid exposition of Schelling's limited use of Böhme is in Paola Mayer's *Jena Romanticism and Its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme: Theosophy, Hagiography, Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), ch. 9. Cf. Schlegel, *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier, KA* viii. 105–433, esp. 199–215, 229–53. In 1813 Schlegel remarked somewhat superciliously in the *Wiener Allgemeine Literaturzeitung* that Schelling 'has distanced himself decisively from pantheism and from Spinoza, and now seems to be following an entirely different and higher path' (*KA* viii. 464).

[61] Schelling, *Die Weltalter: Fragmente*, ed. Manfred Schröter (Munich: Biederstein, 1946), 10 (version of 1811); Jamme, *Einführung*, 64.

whole of history his earlier interpretation of modernity, according to which (as we have seen) divinity is experienced *in* history, Schelling dissolved the obstacle he had conceived earlier to the realization of the new mythology. But precisely because all mythologies and religions could now be interpreted as cumulatively recording the progressive revelation of the absolute to humanity, the project of a new mythology—as a distinctly modern aesthetic expression of the symbolism of nature and communal expression of rationally grounded social cohesion—lost its urgency.

The contrast between a spontaneously arising genuine mythic thought and an artificially created pseudomythic thought may be, as Gadamer argued, nothing more than 'a Romantic illusion based on an Enlightenment prejudice that the poetic act, because it is a creation of the free imagination, no longer shares in the religion-like binding force of myth [*der religiösen Verbindlichkeit des Mythos*]'.[62] But that illusion is what simultaneously prevented the new mythology as such from being formed and permitted a new mythological poetry to be written. Poems such as Hölderlin's 'Bread and Wine' (written in 1801) and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), which appropriate both classical antiquity and Christianity and transform them syncretically, take as their subject the modern awareness that the ancients' experience of the gods is irrecoverable. Hölderlin's elegy, composed in classically inspired distichs of alternating dactylic hexameters and pentameters, identifies Christ and Dionysus, each the son of a divine father and human mother, as the 'departed gods' (*entflohene Götter*) whose material tokens of bread and wine, through the poet's mediation, may reassure us in the present 'lean years' (*in dürftiger Zeit*) of the enduring, if obscured, bond between divinity and humanity:

> Brod ist der Erde Frucht, dochs ists vom Lichte geseegnet,
> Und vom donnernden Gott kommet die Freude des Weins.
> Darum denken wir auch dabei der Himmlischen, die sonst
> Da gewesen und die kehren in richtiger Zeit. [63]

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[62] Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, in *Gesammelte Werke* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986–95), i. 279.

[63] Hölderlin, 'Brod und Wein', ll. 137–41, in *Sämtliche Werke: Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, ed. Friedrich Beißner and Adolf Beck (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1943–85), ii. 94. On Hölderlin's use of Dionysus see Frank, *Der kommende Gott*, 257–342,

(Bread is the fruit of the earth, yet it's blessed by the light of the sun,
And from the thundering god comes the pleasure of wine.
Thus by their means we think of the heavenly beings who once
Had been here and are to return when the time is ripe.)

For his part Shelley sufficiently overcame his youthful condescension towards the classical myths, expressed in *Queen Mab* (1813) in a paraphrase of the baron d'Holbach's theogonic theory, to recreate the myth of Prometheus as a cosmic psychomachia. In *Prometheus Unbound* the eponymous protagonist is not only identified with Christ, as well as with Milton's Satan, but progressively humanized as he retracts his curse against Jupiter, recognizes his 'destiny to be, | The saviour and the strength of suffering man', and finally accepts the love of the goddess Asia, with whom he retires to cultivate the arts.[64] By the end of Act 3, in the original conclusion to the drama, the Spirit of the Hour offers a vision in which the living gods of myth are captured in and confined to the frozen 'Phidian forms' of sculpture, and in which humans—without becoming gods themselves—supplant Jupiter and thereby rejuvenate the earth:

> The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
> Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed—but man:
> Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
> Exempt from awe, worship, degree,—the King
> Over himself; just, gentle, wise—but man ….
>
> (3. 194–8)

The society proclaimed here is the one promised by the 'Systemprogramm'. But the gods' joyous contemplation of their own demise

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esp. 265–78; Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, 91–2; and Christoph Jamme and Frank Völkel (eds.), *Hölderlin und der deutsche Idealismus: Dokumente und Kommentare zu Hölderlins philosophischer Entwicklung und den philosophisch-kulturellen Kontexten seiner Zeit* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2003), iv. 210–26.

[64] *Queen Mab*, 6. 72–9, and *Prometheus Unbound*, 1. 20, 31–2, 584–5, 815–17, 3. 3. 6–63, in *The Poems of Shelley*, ed. G. M. Matthews and Kelvin Everest (Harlow: Longman, 1989–), vols. i and ii. On Shelley's earlier and later attitudes towards classical myth and the pagan gods, see Anthony John Harding, *The Reception of Myth in English Romanticism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 158–62, 192–9. In 1816 Shelley republished canto 6, ll. 72–102 of *Queen Mab* separately under the title 'Superstition' and without the long poem's apparatus of extracts from Holbach's *Système de la nature* (1770).

warns us that we must create that society for ourselves precisely because we cannot expect it to be delivered to us from heaven—or from Olympus.

By the 1840s, when Schelling was lecturing in Berlin on the philosophy of mythology, the concept of the symbol had long since ceded its centrality in his thought to the theory of the three 'potencies' (*Potenzen*), relations of subjectivity and objectivity governing the absolute's self-realization. Yet in those late lectures he continued to oppose allegorizing interpretations of mythical figures on the grounds that 'the gods are actually existing *beings*, whose *existence* is not something different from their *meaning*, for they mean *only* what they are', and he criticized the dissociation of symbol from myth in a work that otherwise strongly influenced his own syncretic approach to mythology, Friedrich Creuzer's *Symbolism and Mythology of Ancient Peoples* (1810–12), which claimed that migrating Indian priests had transmitted their monotheistic religion to Greece.[65] Appropriating the basic Romantic distinction between the symbolic as intuitive and the allegorical as discursive representation, Creuzer had at once refined the distinction in one respect and significantly altered it in another.

His refinement, noted by Walter Benjamin, consisted in adding temporality to the terms of the distinction: whereas the symbol embodies an idea and thus reveals it directly and instantaneously, in a

[65] Schelling, *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie*, lects. 4 (critique of Creuzer) and 8 (being and meaning), *SW* xi. 77, 88–93, 196. Cf. Edward Allen Beach, *The Potencies of God(s): Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), 20–3, 31–45; and Jamme, *Einführung*, 64–7. Beach (22 n. 26) professes surprise that Schelling never deigned to cite Görres's *Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt* (1810), despite its similarity in aim to Creuzer's *Symbolik* (indeed the *Mythengeschichte* was dedicated to Creuzer, who in turn quoted from the *Mythengeschichte* in the epigraph to the second edition of the *Symbolik*). But quite apart from his 'unscholarly method', Görres's political notoriety, first as a Rhenish republican and later as a German nationalist, would hardly have endeared him to a philosopher who had become in effect a representative of the Bavarian (and, after 1841, of the Prussian) monarchy. On the German Romantic fascination with India, which was stimulated by Sir William Jones's 'On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India' (1784), see A. Leslie Willson, *A Mythical Image: The Ideal of India in German Romanticism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1964); and Ernst Behler, 'Das Indienbild der deutschen Romantik', *Germanisch Romanische Monatsschrift*, ns 18 (1968), 21–37.

'momentary totality' (*momentane Totalität*), allegory conveys an idea external to itself indirectly and sequentially, in a 'series of moments'.[66] If he did not, as Benjamin complained, pursue the epistemological implications of this observation as far as he might have, the reason is that he was concerned with the semiotic characteristics of symbol and allegory only to the extent that they were relevant to his historical thesis. The symbol, whose resistence to discursive interpretation Creuzer compares to the effect of a dark cloud on the appearance of a rainbow, is divine in origin and hence uniquely suited to the communication of sacred mysteries to initiates: 'just as religious ritual as a whole [*der ganze Götterdienst*] is a continuation of that assistance which the gods first afforded to mankind, so all the symbolism by which the priests render higher knowledge rests not on arbitrary, humanly instituted designation [*Bezeichnung*], but precisely on that aboriginal connection [to divinity].'[67] Transmitted to Greece, Eastern religion survives in its pure, symbolic form only in the mystery cults and certain philosophical schools, but is vulgarized and widely disseminated in the form of narrative elaborations, that is, allegories. As public narratives, myths must therefore be classified as allegorical rather than, as in Schelling's aesthetic taxonomy, symbolic:

allegory, but not the symbol, comprehends under itself myth, the essence of which is expressed most perfectly in the progressive epic…. When we consider the spirit of the oldest myths, however, we must go further and declare that, if not most, then extraordinarily many are originally nothing but *symbols made explicit* [*ausgesprochene Symbole*]. Priestly interpretation, an exegete's pronouncement [*Ausspruch*] on a symbol's meaning and purpose, doubtless brought many myths into being.[68]

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[66] Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, 2nd edn. (Leipzig, 1819–21), i. 70 (pt. 1, §35). Cf. Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1972–89), i. 340–1. Creuzer's recognition of the 'plastic symbol', encompassing artistic representations of the gods in which form and essence are 'wonderfully united', was an anomalous vestige of Winckelmannian and Weimar classicism, irreconcileable (except, evidently, in his own mind) with his repeated insistence on the 'incongruity of the essence with the form' in the symbol (*Symbolik*, i. 64, 59 (pt. 1, §§33 and 30)). See Sørensen, *Symbol und Symbolismus*, 272–3.

[67] Creuzer, *Symbolik*, i. 59, 36 (pt. 1, §§30 and 19).

[68] Ibid. i. 70–1, 91 (pt. 1, §§35 and 41; the latter a passage added to the second edition).

If Creuzer accepted, perhaps indeed too uncritically, the early Romantic subordination of allegory to the symbol, he did not, on account of his exclusively historical approach, share the difficulty that Schelling and Schlegel had in reconciling claims for the antiquity and the contemporaneity of the symbol or of mythology. Whatever the extent of his influence on nineteenth-century *Altertumswissenschaft*, Creuzer's taxonomic separation of symbol and myth and historical derivation of the latter from the former mark a decisive departure from the theorization of the symbol in connection with what Gadamer called Romantic attempts at 'community-formation' (*Gemeindebildung*), as in the project of a new mythology.[69] It was exactly because his conception of the symbol implicitly devalued the exoteric in favour of the esoteric, the mythic in favour of the cultic, and not least ancient Greece in favour of ancient India, that Creuzer's *Symbolik* generated a prolonged controversy. Among those who remained unsympathetic to his researches, if not as severely critical of them as classicists like J. H. Voss and Gottfried Hermann, was none other than the first writer to have opposed symbol and allegory:

> Die geschichtlichten Symbole—
> Törig, wer sie wichtig hält;
> Immer forschet er ins Hohle
> Und versäumt die reiche Welt.[70]

[69] Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, i. 94. On Creuzer's influence see Raymond Firth, *Symbols Public and Private* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973), 99–101; and Frank, *Der kommende Gott*, 88–94. Frank considers Creuzer's distinction between symbol and myth the indirect source, mediated through the Swiss historian J. J. Bachofen, of Nietzsche's distinction between the Dionysian and Apollonian. Cf. *An Essay on Ancient Mortuary Symbolism* (1859), in *Myth, Religion, and Mother-Right: Selected Writings of J. J. Bachofen*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Routledge, 1967), 21–65, at 48–50.

[70] Goethe, *Zahme Xenien*, 6. 10 (1827), *GA* i. 663. On the other hand, Goethe's well-known description of the symbol as a 'living and momentary revelation of the inscrutable' (*Maximen und Reflexionen*, no. 314 (from 1826), *GA* ix. 532) was almost certainly inspired by Creuzer. Goethe's participation in the *Symbolikerstreit* is conveniently documented in *Goethe und die Antike: Eine Sammlung*, ed. Ernst Grumach (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1949), ii. 705–20; that of contemporary classicists, in Ernst Howald (ed.), *Der Kampf um Creuzers Symbolik: Eine Auswahl von Dokumenten* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1926). See also Éva Kosziky, 'Samothrake: Ein Streit um Creuzers Symbolik und das Wesen der Mythologie', *Antike und Abendland*, 43 (1997), 174–89; and George Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004),

(Historical symbols—
Foolish, who grants them worth;
While searching in holes,
He neglects the rest of the earth.)

Yet Creuzer's historicism, by which I mean his treatment of the symbol strictly as an historical phenomenon, may be seen as a logical consequence of the early Romantic projection of the envisioned symbolism of nature into antiquity. Since that act of projection had coincided, in the project of the new mythology, with the resolute differentiation of modernity from antiquity, the purported antiquity of the symbol could not offer unequivocal assurance of its viability in the present. Under these circumstances one could not assert the historicity of the symbol without the risk of *condemning* it to history, just as, according to Peter Szondi, Hölderlin could not recognize the artificiality of Greek art without thereby rejecting the imitation of it: 'No longer nature but rather a response to a nature which is not ours, the classical seems to lose the ability to be a model for the modern.'[71] As Hegel's lectures on art demonstrate, the condition of accepting with equanimity the historicization of the symbol was a willingness to renounce the possibility of its modernity: thus Hegel favoured restricting the term *symbolic* to the earliest of the three stages (symbolic, classical, and romantic) in the developmental history of art, a stage he identified (under Creuzer's influence) primarily with ancient India and Egypt.[72]

But another of Creuzer's readers, the Jena-educated, theosophically minded physician Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert, mounted a rearguard action, in his desultorily composed *Symbolism of the Dream* (1814), to preserve the Romantic fantasy of a recoverable universal symbolism.

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ch. 3. Contrary to Voss's assumption, the *Symbolik* was precisely not simply 'a piece of Romantic audacity', still less the child of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*: see Voss's *Antisymbolik* (Stuttgart, 1824–6), i. 46, 371. In the third edition of the *Symbolik* (1837–42), Creuzer banished his particularly controversial introductory section—the one most accessible to non-specialist readers—to the end of the fourth volume and designated it an appendix.

[71] Szondi, 'Überwindung des Klassizismus: Der Brief an Böhlendorff vom 4. Dezember 1801', in *Schriften*, ed. Jean Bollack et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978), i. 345–66, at 348.

[72] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (posth. published 1835), pt. 2, §1, esp. the Introduction. On Hegel's references to Creuzer, see Jamme, *Einführung*, 54–5.

Compensating for the projection of the symbol into the consciousness of ancient man, Schubert projected it as well into the unconsciousness of modern man, a gesture that permitted him to accept Creuzer's historical findings while denying their historicist premise. In the 'hieroglyphics' of dreams—a universal, unchanging, non-discursive, pictorial language 'entirely different from ordinary language'—we may, Schubert proposed, glimpse dimly what the ancients, to whom nature had appeared both as a dream itself and as a guide to understanding dreams (*zugleich Traum und Traumdeuter*), perceived clearly: that 'destiny within and outside us [*das Schicksal in und außer uns*] … speaks the same language as our soul in dreams'.[73] To learn the language of dreams anew—a task that Schubert acknowledged was complicated by the obscurity and even mendacity of some dreams, as well as by the cognitive differences between ancient and modern man—would be to confirm our preordained harmony with the world around us: 'Such a commonality of language between our soul and the highest creative principle [*des höchsten schaffenden Prinzips*] suggests another, deeper agreement between them.'[74]

But while Schubert's book found admirers, particularly among writers like E. T. A. Hoffmann and Kleist, who were fascinated with subconscious states of mind, its reception was largely unfavourable, and indeed two of its harshest critics were the most important Romantic theorists of the symbol, Schelling and Coleridge: Schelling on account of the book's unphilosophical form, Coleridge on account of his own reluctance to concede any meaningfulness to oneiric content, which he considered a product of irrational association. Neither recognized in Schubert's treatise a valuable, let alone necessary, supplement to his own considerations of the subject. Reviewing Albert Béguin's pioneering study of German Romanticism, *L'Ame romantique et le rêve*, in 1939, Benjamin rightly observed that the 'appeal to dream life was a distress signal; it revealed less the soul's way home

[73] Schubert, *Symbolik des Traumes* (1814; facs. repr. Heidelberg: Schneider, 1968), 1, 55, 2. In the second edition (Bamberg, 1821), Schubert explained more fully what he meant by *Schicksal*: 'the succession of past and present events [*Geschehenen und Geschehenden*] inside and outside us, the inner orderliness [*Gesetzmäßigkeit*] of which remains in so many ways imperceptible and dark to us, speaks the same language as our soul in dreams' (p. 5).
[74] Ibid. (1st edn.), 29.

into the motherland than that obstacles had already blocked the way'.[75] That Schubert himself had begun by the 1820s to relinquish his hope for the actualization of the symbol in modern consciousness was signalled in the revised second edition of the *Symbolik*, which devalued the significance of dreams in order to affirm the revelatory supremacy of sacred scripture.

At the end of the nineteenth century, when Freud, the collector of antiquities who fancied himself an archaeologist of the mind, trod down the same path as Schubert, a path overgrown after decades of neglect but still recognizable as the royal road to the unconscious, he too was seeking a language common to all humans. But it is hardly surprising that he judged Schubert's conception of dreams 'as an elevation of mental life to a higher level … to be scarcely intelligible'.[76] What Freud was expecting to find, after all, was a message not of universal harmony but of selfish brutality.

[75] Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, iii. 557–60, at 560. Schelling's criticism of the *Symbolik* was expressed in a letter of 28 Feb. 1815 (*Aus Schellings Leben: In Briefen*, ed. G. L. Plitt (Leipzig, 1869–70), ii. 353), Coleridge's (referring to the second edition) in two notes of uncertain date (*Marginalia*, ed. H. J. Jackson and George Whalley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980–2001), iv. 541–4). For a brief overview of the book's reception, see Gerhard Sauder's afterword to the facsimile reprint of the first edition (pp. xxi–v). On Schubert's revisions in the later editions, made largely for the sake of Christian piety, see Sauder in Schubert, *Symbolik des Traumes*, pp. xix–xxi, and Béguin, *L'Ame romantique et le rêve: Essai sur le romantisme allemande et la poésie française* (Marseilles: Cahiers du sud, 1937), i. 217–20.

[76] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–74), iv. 63; cf. v. 634. On the rejection of Schubert by both Freud and Coleridge, see Nicholas Halmi, 'Why Coleridge Was Not a Freudian', *Dreaming: Journal of the American Association for the Study of Dreams*, 7 (1997), 13–28, at 17–19 and 24–5.

The So-called 'Oldest Programme for a System of German Idealism' (*c*.1796)¹

an ethics. Since the whole of metaphysics will in future fall under the heading of *morality*—of which Kant with his two practical postulates² gave merely an *example*, but not an *exhaustive* treatment—this ethics will be nothing less than a complete system of all ideas, or, what amounts to the same thing, of all practical postulates. The first idea is naturally the conception *of myself* as an absolutely free being. Along with this free, self-conscious being an entire *world* emerges—out of nothing—the one true and conceivable *creation out of nothing*. Here I shall descend to the field of physics; the question is this: how must a world be constituted for a moral being? I should like to give wings once again to our physics, which paces slowly and laboriously by means of experiments.

So—if philosophy provides the ideas and experience the data, we can finally have a physics in the larger sense, which I expect from future ages. It does not seem that present-day physics could satisfy a creative spirit [*einen schöpferischen Geist*], such as ours is, or ought to be.

From nature I come to *human works* [*Menschenwerk*]. First and foremost the idea of humanity—I want to show that there is no idea of the *state* because the state is something *mechanical*, just as there is no idea of a *machine*. Only an object of *freedom* is called an *idea* [*Idee*].³ Thus we must go beyond the state! For every state must treat free persons as mechanical

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¹ See Chapter 5 for discussion of this document. My translation is based on the facsimile and transcript of the manuscript in Christoph Jamme and Helmut Schneider (eds.), *Mythologie der Vernunft: Hegels 'ältestes Systemprogramm' des deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1984), 8–14, although I have also consulted Rüdiger Bubner's edition in *Das älteste Systemprogramm: Studien zur Frühgeschichte des deutschen Idealismus* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1973), 261–5. Words cancelled in the manuscript are not included in the translation.

² In fact Kant names three postulates of pure practical reason: of the immortality of the soul, of freedom of the will, and of the existence of God (see the *Critique of Practical Reason*, bk. 2, ch. 2, §§4–6).

³ Here *idea* is used in the Kantian sense of a non-empirical product of reason which defines the aims of knowledge or ethical conduct (see the *Critique of Pure Reason*, B367–96).

gears, and it should not do so; hence it should *cease to be*. You see for yourselves that all ideas of perpetual peace, etc. are merely ideas *subordinated* to a higher idea. At the same time I want to lay down principles for a *history of humanity*, and to strip down to the skin the whole miserable human fabrication [*Menschenwerk*] of states, constitutions, governments, legislation. In the end come the ideas of a moral world, divinity, immortality—the overthrow of all asinine superstition,⁴ the persecution, by means of reason itself, of the priesthood, which of late has been feigning reason. The absolute freedom of all spirits [*Geister*], who bear the intellectual [*intellektuelle*] world within themselves and ought to seek neither God nor immortality *outside themselves*.

In the end the idea that unites all others, the idea of *beauty*, taken in the higher Platonic sense of the word. I am now convinced that the highest act of reason is, by virtue of encompassing all ideas, an aesthetic act, and that *truth and goodness* are related to one another *only in beauty*. The philosopher must possess as much aesthetic power as the writer [*Dichter*]. The people without aesthetic sense are our literal-minded philosophers.⁵ The philosophy of the spirit [*des Geistes*] is an aesthetic philosophy. One cannot be inspired [*geistreich*] in anything—one cannot reason inspiredly even about history—without an aesthetic sense. Here should become evident what is truly lacking in people who do not understand ideas—and who freely admit that everything becomes mysterious to them as soon as it goes beyond tables of contents and indexes.

Poetry [*die Poësie*] accordingly will attain a higher dignity, becoming in the end what it was in the beginning—the *teacher of humanity* [*Lehrerin der Menschheit*]. For there will be no more philosophy, no more history—literature [*die Dichtkunst*] alone will survive all other sciences and arts.

At the same time we hear so often that the great multitude [*Hauffen*] must have a *sensuous religion*. Not only the multitude but the philosopher too

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⁴ 'Asinine superstition' is an attempt to render the untranslatable neologism *Afterglaube*, combining *After*, 'anus', with *Aberglaube*, 'superstition', which was written first and then cancelled in the manuscript. 'Backward religion' would be an alternative. David Farrell Krell suggests still others: 'anal compulsive religiosity', 'rectal rectitude', and 'belief in a hinterhaven' (*The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 33).

⁵ *Buchstabenphilosophen, Buchstaben* meaning 'letters of the alphabet': 'pedantic philosophers' is the general sense. The term evidently refers to the disciples of Christian Wolff who dominated German philosophical faculties in the eighteenth century and were among Kant's most outspoken critics. The contrast with *Geist*, 'spirit', recalls 2 Corinthians 3: 6 ('Denn der Buchstabe tötet, aber der Geist macht lebendig' in Luther's translation) and perhaps also alludes to Fichte's *On the Spirit and Letter in Philosophy* (1794).

needs it. Monotheism of reason and the heart, polytheism of imagination and art—that is what we need![6]

First I shall speak here of an idea that, so far as I know, has not before entered anyone's mind—we must have a new mythology, but this mythology must stand in the service of ideas, it must become a mythology of *reason*.

Before we make ideas aesthetic, that is, mythological, they are of no interest to the *people* [*das Volk*], and conversely, before mythology is rational the philosopher must be ashamed of it. In the end, therefore, enlightened and unenlightened must shake hands, mythology must become philosophical and the people rational,[7] and philosophy must become mythological in order to make philosophers sensuous [*sinnlich*]. Then eternal unity will reign among us. Never again the contemptuous look, the blind trembling of the people before their wise men and priests. Only then will the *equal* development of *all* powers await us, those of the particular person [*des Einzelnen*] as well as of all individuals. No power will again be suppressed, for the universal freedom and equality of all spirits [*der Geister*] will reign! A higher spirit sent from heaven must found this new religion among us; it will be the last and greatest work of mankind.

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[6] Cf. Goethe's aphophthegm, quoted in Chapter 4 at n. 62: 'We are pantheists in the study of nature, polytheists in poetry, monotheists in ethics.'

[7] Although the manuscript clearly reads *und das Volk vernünftig*, some editors emend to *um das Volk vernünftig*, 'in order [to make] the people rational'.

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