

Friedrich Schlegel and the Fragmentary Self of Romantic Psychology

“By their fruits you shall know them.”

Abstract

Romantic psychology is first specified in counter-distinction to Enlightenment-informed faculty-psychology, whose scientific paradigm is fundamentally materialistic and mechanistic. Romantic psychology is then presented through Fr. Schlegel's theory and practice of the literary fragment. In the fragment, we discover selfhood that is self-positing, powered by electro-chemical forces and enlivened by the stimulating Other. Romantic psychology determines the self as an ironic system, complete and yet organically open to other selves. It is phenomenological in nature and its contemporary legacy can be found in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytical hermeneutics.

In this article, I will attempt to establish the specificity of Romantic psychology. I will do this, first of all, by distinguishing it from psychological science as it arises in the Enlightenment, in what might be broadly defined as faculty-psychology. To provide an idea of such Enlightenment-informed faculty-psychology, I will examine the content of a college-level course in psychology as it was taught at the Tübingen *Stift* (Seminary) in 1789. I will then juxtapose this view with what I believe is the specificity of Romantic psychology which I discover by examining the work of Early German Romanticism's main protagonist, Friedrich Schlegel, from his *Athenaeum* period writings (1797-1800). My contention is that if indeed a psychology is to be found in Schlegel, it takes place in his theory and practice of the literary fragment.

In Schlegel's Romantic fragment, we discover a notion of selfhood as essentially self-positing, an interpretive instantiation of the Fichtean "I". Besides this well-known element of Schlegel's work, I will bring to light the dynamic ontology of creative wit (*Witz*) as an expression of electro-chemical force. Finally, I show how Schlegel's science of the literary

fragment relies on the organic biology of “stimulation” that he discovers in John Brown’s popular theory of medicine. The stimulation Other thus becomes an essential element of Romantic psychology.

If Schlegel’s theory and practice of the literary fragment are indeed revelatory of a psychology specific to Romanticism generally, we should be able to observe its key elements in other Romantic players. I will illustrate how this might be tested with cursory sketches of how my findings might apply to Novalis and Schleiermacher. Finally, I will conclude with a brief remark on Romantic psychology’s contemporary legacy, again in its contrast from the faculty-based science of the psyche tributary to Enlightenment thought. Is it possible to find in today’s experimental, empirical and neurologically-centered practice of psychology the descendance of the Enlightenment’s faculty-psychology and its attempt to locate and categorize different mental functions in such a way as to colonize even the most apparently irrational provinces of the mind? Conversely, are more act and language-centered, phenomenological and psychoanalytical approaches to the mind not based on notions of creative self-expression that can be found in Schlegel’s view of the fragmentary self?

1. Enlightenment Psychology

According to the account that I am putting forward, the beginnings of modern faculty-psychology can be situated in the late 18th Century. I would like to present this scientific approach to the mind by evoking a source that I am familiar with: the material from a college-level course that was taught at the Tübingen Seminary, in 1789, by J. F. Flatt, entitled “Empirical Psychology” and which presents its object, the human psyche, in terms of distinct faculties

(*Vermögen*) which are derived, at least in part, from psychological interpretations of Kant's first *Critique*.¹

We have access to Flatt's course through Hegel's course notes, when he was a student at Tübingen, notes that he conserved and later used in developing his own material on Subjective Spirit, in the later elaborations of that section in his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*.² I am not here concerned with Hegel nor how he later used this material. I am simply taking Flatt's course as a fulsome expression of what university-level, faculty-psychology generally looked like in the late *Aufklärung* of 1780's Germany. Since Flatt himself seems to have developed his course material by drawing from a number of contemporary sources on psychology, notes from his course are particularly pertinent.

First, a word about the provenance of Hegel's notes from the Flatt's course. The editors of the critical Hegel *Gesammelte Werke*, having analyzed the manuscript's handwriting and the paper's watermark, conclude it was penned while Hegel was in Bern, probably in 1794.³ However, referring to the testimonial of Hegel's fellow student Betzendörfer, Hoffmeister attributes the source of the Hegel manuscript to J. F. Flatt, whose course in empirical psychology Hegel had indeed taken, in 1789/90.⁴ Hegel's 1794 manuscript on psychology therefore seems to be the later transcription of the course notes that he took while attending Flatt's lecture four or five years earlier. This supposition seems confirmed by Dieter Henrich, who in 1964 discovered the course notes of Friedrich Klüpfel, another fellow Tübingen student of Hegel's who also took Flatt's course in 1790. The content of the Klüpfel course notes is virtually identical to most of the 1794 psychology manuscript.

Hoffmeister's remarkable analysis of the central portion of the 1794 manuscript further establishes that its content represents Flatt's compilation taken from a number of sources, in

preparation for his 1789 course: the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but also from secondary literature, such as works by J. F. Abel, C. C. E. Schmid, Johann Schultz and Reinhold. As we will see, it is the latter's reading of Kant's transcendental aesthetic and its faculties as principally productive of representations that is particularly determinant in Flatt's conception of "Empirical Psychology".

Who was J. Flatt and can we establish his Enlightenment bona fides? Flatt has been referred to disparagingly by Frederick Beiser as the "Scrooge of Tübingen"⁵. Certainly, he was the assistant of the dogmatic theology professor G. C. Storr, himself famous for his anachronistic and quixotic defense of orthodox religion and the literal truth (i.e. Revelation) of the Bible, the Trinity and miracles, in the face of the Kantian critiques. However, as Beiser himself points out, there are, in fact, two Flatts, the "reactionary" professor of theology, defender of supernaturalism⁶ and the earlier version, a champion of Leibnizian/Wolffian late Enlightenment reason, against Kant's critique of metaphysical thought. In his famous polemical reviews of Kant's work (1788 and 1789),⁷ Flatt is arguing for the objective reality of transcendent causation and the consequent possibility for a cosmological proof of the existence of God. In other words, Flatt defends the Enlightenment reason of Leibniz, Wolff and Mendelssohn against the limitations imposed by Kant's first *Critique*. It is this J. F. Flatt who put together the lecture notes on empirical psychology.⁸

That Flatt's course notes reflect an early example of faculty-psychology (*Vermögenspsychologie* or *Seelenvermögen*) is evident from the omnipresence of the term "Vermögen" throughout the manuscript, inspired, no doubt, by Kant's own establishment of mental *Grundvermögen*, in the Transcendental Aesthetic: sensibility, imagination, representation, understanding and reason. Among other faculties, Flatt's notes refer to "Anschauungsvermögen,

praktische Vermögen, Vermögen der Vernunft, Empfindungsvermögen, Begehrensvermögen, Erkenntnisvermögen and Gefuehlsvermögen”.⁹

Flatt’s course was entitled “Empirical Psychology” not because it espoused an experiment-based methodology as we might understand it today but rather because it referred to the empirical aspects of the soul, as presented in Kant’s *Transcendental Aesthetics* and in his theory of knowledge generally. Following Reinhold’s popular presentation of Kant, in his *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens* (1789), the material production of consciousness is principally representational. Indeed, as we find in the course notes, “der Seele Grundkraft [ist] vorstellende Kraft” (Hoffmeister p. 199) and from those representations, the *Verstand* is meant to produce judgments or knowledge statements. While Reason remains detached from the content of experience (“kommt nicht ueber die Erfahrung hinaus”), as the faculty of the unconditioned, Reason nonetheless “grounds” the entire process of representation: “Ein Schein ist in dem Vermögen der Vernunft selbst gegründet. (Hoffmeister, p. 196)”. In other words, the various mental faculties are arranged in a hierarchical fashion, in a way that points to their ultimate use by Reason in its unconditioned, legislative vocation, making “synthetic a priori judgments” (Hoffmeister p. 196), including practical or moral ones.

Thus, Flatt’s topology of the mind is divided into the “lower” faculties of sensibility (*Empfindungsvermögen* and *Phantasie*) and the “upper” faculties of *Verstand* and *Vernunft*. The latter is what makes (universal) laws, under which the lower faculties must fall. In other words, the very possibility of psychology as a science of the psyche rests on the legislative abilities of the highest mental faculty, Reason, in establishing the laws of the psyche generally. This legislative activity of Reason is particularly crucial when faced with the unruly aspects of feeling and fantasy.

The first lower faculty is sensibility. Its representations are divided in two: those produced by the outer senses and those produced from inner sense. In both cases, the aim of psychology, as presented in Flatt's notes, is to establish "laws, conditions or causes" governing the production of representations. Regarding the outer senses, this is fairly straightforward and involves the interplay between the sense organs and the strength of the sensation felt. In the course material manuscript, the representations which are drawn from the outer senses, through the sense faculties (*Gefühlsvermögen*) of touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight, all depend on the "concept" (rather than the Kantian "form") of space, (Hoffmeister pp. 197-8).

Of greater interest to Enlightenment psychology is the second group of representations, the ones derived from the faculty of inner feeling (*Empfindungsvorstellungen*). Such inner representations are generated through the concept of time rather than through that of space. While some of these are consciously evoked through the power of conscious thought and will, what seems to provide a real challenge for the "empirical" psychology of the Enlightenment are those inner representations that are produced "from the soul without being produced by consciousness (Hoffmeister p. 199)". In more contemporary terms, the fundamental psychological question addressed in this part of the notes is the ability of rational science to explain the irrational representations of the unconsciousness mind.

This task clearly stretches beyond Kant's project in the Transcendental Aesthetic where the material of sensibility is worked on by the imagination in order to produce representations for the purpose of judgment and knowledge, through the *Verstand*. Here, in Flatt's course notes on "Empirical psychology", the inner soul itself is observed to produce representations unbidden, without any claim to the production of empirical knowledge (Hoffmeister p. 199). The scientific question becomes therefore, what laws, conditions or causes govern the composition of

unconscious representations? How do they arise, “without remembering, without consciousness” as in cases of sleepwalking, dreaming or clairvoyance?

Significantly, it is not the provenance of the inner representations that determines their clarity. The “laws of clarity” that the manuscript evokes have nothing to do with whether representations are derived from conscious remembering of outer sensations through the will or whether they arise unbidden from the inner soul. In fact, the problem is that clarity is completely unrelated to truth, either as an a priori Cartesian criterion or as the reliable trace of a recent empirical impression (Hobbes, Hume). Rather, the undeniable clarity of certain inner representations is governed by such factors as physiological conditions, strong emotions like grief or the desire to escape a new and unpleasant condition that breaks our habitual existence. Rousseau is mentioned, apparently as an example of the lonely “Selbstbeobachter” particularly susceptible to clear inner representations (Hoffmeister p. 200).

Of the “lower faculties” of sensibility and *Phantaisie*, the notes spend significantly more time on the latter. While *Phantaisie* seems to fulfill some of the synthesizing role that Kant assigns to the imagination (as *Einbildung*) in the production of representational material upon which the *Verstand* will operate, *Phantaisie* is much more creative and unruly. While it contributes to artistic production through the *Dichtungsvermögen* and to knowledge through its role in the conservation (*Aufbehalten*) or the recalling (*Gedächtnis*) of representations, as well as through its agency in recognition and remembering (*Rekognition, Erinnerung*) (Hoffmeister p. 200), *Phantaisie*’s representations are most significantly analysed with respect to their unbidden, pathological and unruly character. It is the uncontrolled “reawakening” (*Wiedererweckung*) of the *Phantaisievorstellungen* that Flatt’s notes on empirical psychology seem especially concerned with. Given that such pathological phenomena occur, the notes are particularly

interested in determining the “laws” and “causes” that govern their appearance. “Nach welchen Gesetzen”? Flatt asks (Hoffmeister p. 201). What are the “Ursachen der Wiederweckung der Vorstellungen? (Hoffmeister p. 202)” “Was veranlasst die Seele, bestimmte Ideen oder Ideenreihen zu erwecken? (Hoffmeister p. 203)”

The central idea of Flatt’s course is that the “lower” faculties of the mind produce representations; in certain cases, these arise unbidden but nonetheless vivid (*Klar*). These unbidden representations explain the existence of pathological, paranormal and sometimes artistic phenomena, which can all be traced back to the spontaneous production of representations by the faculties of sensibility and *Phantaisie*. We may thus “explain” such phenomena by tying them to the faculties involved in representation. And we can “use” this theory to “explain” “certain conditions (Hoffmeister p. 205)” (dreaming, sleepwalking, madness, premonitions, visions). While some of these may be explained with “general laws (Hoffmeister p. 202)”, which seem to pertain to a causality among the representations themselves (e.g. similarity between representations and their proximity, obeying “laws of association (Hoffmeister p. 206)” and thus functioning like Hume’s general principles of the imagination, most of the re-awakened, unbidden representations occur as a result of “special laws”, which refer to material or physiological causes: fever, sickness, headaches, dispositions of the brain, the weather, light and darkness, bodily conditions like “Blut nach der Brust, Angst.”, as well as drunkenness, hypochondria (Hoffmeister p. 203).

There is thus a marked materialism involved in the new science of Enlightenment psychology as presented in Flatt’s course. First and most obviously, in its physiological account of mental states, which are caused either by bodily conditions or through neurological “mechanical causes [where] one fiber stirs another” thus creating an unbidden “representation”

(Hoffmeister p. 202). More subtly perhaps, Flatt's Enlightenment account supposes a material causality between representations (or ideas) themselves. The "general laws" of their association (e.g. similarity, contiguity) imply a corporeal ontology that is just as material as that found in the Newtonian configuration of Hume's principles of the imagination or even in Hobbes' presentation, in his *Leviathan*, of ideas joining together to form "trains of thought".

Configuring ideas as material entities is the hallmark of materialism and its fondest project. Significantly, the materialistic, empirical slant of Enlightenment psychology allows it to overcome the crucial metaphysical hurdle subsidiary to Cartesian "psychology" of the self: the fact that for Descartes, there can be no interaction between the two substances of extension and thought (between body and mind). In such a priori psychology, there can be no reference to physical causality and even the empirical observation of mental pathologies remains as dubious as the phenomena Descartes observes in his experiment with candle wax.¹⁰

Particularly noteworthy, with respect to the more active, creative notion of selfhood that we will observe in Romanticism, in Flatt's course note the material agency of unbidden representations goes as far as to explain the "Dichtungsvermögen" (artistic faculty). On the Enlightenment psychological reading, the creative faculty does indeed "produce representations" (Hoffmeister p. 205) but it does so through the workings of the (Kantian) categories of the understanding: quantity, quality, relation. What the artist does, in producing "new" representations is reduced to the re-working of such received material, for example, in rearranging the order, proportion, size or producing representations that are "general abstractions", which may be understood, I believe, as symbols. Such mechanical production, where artistic representations are run through the faculties of the understanding stands in

opposition to the dynamic conception of self-creation that I will present through an examination of Schlegel's theory and practice of the literary fragment.

Perhaps the most recognizably modern aspect of Enlightenment psychology, with its empirical, material presuppositions, is the "applicable" nature of its finding. In other words, because the material of faculty psychology is actually material, it can be materially applied to certain "conditions where Phantaisie plays a part (Hoffmeister, p. 205)". Such conditions are empirically observed manifestations of the inner workings of unbidden representations, which are generally conceived as pathological to the extent that they do not fall under the mechanisms of knowledge production and Reason. Enlightenment psychology does make "clinical" psychology possible. For in order to conceive of such states, they must be empirically observable (through the body) and for them to be treatable they must be made accessible through the body, involving such "'Körperliche Heilart" as changes of diet and the removal of "Krankheitsmaterie" from the brain (Hoffmeister p. 207). Flatt's course is particularly interested in this applicable aspect, reflecting a timely interest in the diagnosis of "paranormal" or irrational states and their explanation in terms of a theory of the representation arising from the *Phantaisievermögen*.¹¹ In explaining paranormal manifestations like dreams, sleepwalking, madness, premonitions, visions etc. (Hoffmeister p. 205), Enlightenment psychology not only hopes to "reason the unreasonable" but to debunk any Pietist, sentimentalist and, let it be said, (pre)romantic interpretation of such supposedly "supernatural (Hoffmeister p. 210)" phenomena. It is significant that the final pathological state on which the faculty-psychology of representations can be applied is religious enthusiasm and fanaticism, which are explained in terms of a morbid "Reizbarkeit der Organe (Hoffmeister p. 210)".

In the same way that today's neuropsychology tends to limit its explanations of mental events and pathologies to observable phenomena within the brain, through neurological imaging, Enlightenment psychology seems quite content to ground its explanations in the newly discovered "science" of representation. In other words, Reinhold's interpretation of Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic allows the new, empirical psychology to reduce psychic activity to the mental faculties (*Vermögen*) associated with producing representations. As I said above, the material nature of these faculties (and of both the outer and inner sense material from which they derive their equally material representations) implies a causal and thus explanatory complicity between body and mind. Such a vision takes the mind as a fundamentally passive apparatus that processes sentiments and feelings in its faculties, according to prescribed causal laws. Against this view, I would like to present a specifically Romantic psychology, where the psyche is construed primarily as a self-positing activity, where the dominant paradigm relies on natural forces and where the mind is essentially intersubjective.¹² Briefly, to be a self is to posit oneself into and for otherness. Consequently, by examining the "fruits" of the self, we are given access into its psychology. I will explore this idea through Friedrich Schlegel's theory and practice of the literary fragment. This choice is justified through Schlegel's foundational role in German romanticism, in his pioneering definition of Romantic poetry in terms of what might best be called "spirit" or "mind" (*Geist*) and the fact that his actual fragments carry philosophical weight: their theory and practice are conjoined.¹³

2. Friedrich Schlegel's Fragments

Schlegel's theory of the fragment is found, first and foremost, in his fragments themselves, as they appear around the *Athenäum* period, between 1797 and 1800. Broader, less lapidary forms

of expression, such as his essay “On Incomprehensibility,” which appeared in the final issue of that journal and his novel *Lucinde* (1799) do not represent an abandonment of the fragmentary project. Rather, they are themselves further fragmentary expressions, presupposed by the project’s ultimate articulation as universal progressive poetry (*Geist*), which also remains fragmentary. As I have written elsewhere, it is not because we are dealing with a theory of the fragment and irony that Schlegel’s theory itself should be viewed as unsystematic and incoherent, nor that our understanding of it must be fragmentary and ironic.

Schlegel’s theory and practice of the fragment presents a *phenomenon* (*Erscheinung*) of his *Seelenkunde*, of his psychology. Schlegel’s theory and practice of the literary/philosophical fragment can be comprehended according to three participating currents of contemporaneous scientific thought.¹⁴ Together, these collaborate in the organic architecture of Romantic selfhood and its fragmentary expression. These are: Fichte’s fundamental principle of the self as essentially self-positing; Ritter’s explorations into the chemical nature of galvanic electricity; John Brown’s medical theory of organic irritability. They are present in the Romantic self to the extent that they are represented in its works.

2.1 Fichte’s Self-positing I

Schlegel, like many German intellectuals in the final five years of the 18th century, was inspired by J. G. Fichte’s revolutionary grasp of selfhood. According to Fichte’s 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre*, the Absolute I is the self-positing activity of conscious mind in general. This activity implies an oppositional Not-I, an objective otherness that it seeks to overcome in a process of endless, willful striving. The debt Schlegel’s aesthetic ideas owe to Fichte’s seminal work is noted by almost every commentator, beginning with G. W. F. Hegel, who sees Schlegel

as the individual personification of the self's absolute pretensions.¹⁵ More positively, the Schlegel-Fichte relationship is emphasized by Walter Benjamin and explored by more recent commentators.¹⁶ As Schlegel himself acknowledges in *Athenaeum* Fragment 216:¹⁷ “The French Revolution, Fichte’s Doctrine of Science and Goethe’s Meister are the great trends of our time.” While Fichte’s dialectical grasp of subjectivity is hardly the sole source of Schlegel’s inspiration in the *Athenäum* period, it is certainly crucial to his theory of the literary fragment and thus, as I am arguing, to his presentation of Romantic psychology.

What Schlegel adopts from Fichte’s notion of selfhood is first and foremost the notion that it is essentially an act of free self-positing. Mind or spirit (qua *Geist*) is a manifestation of such action: Thus, “*Geist* partakes in an eternal self-demonstration (AF 284)”. The self is essentially self-creative, in the broadest sense of the word. Nonetheless, of key importance in the development of Schlegel’s theory of the fragment is the idea that such positing only takes place against the background of the Not-I, which, in Fichte, is, at least initially, a thoroughly abstract resistance that the I must encounter, both theoretically, as the condition of possibility for any object of knowledge, and practically, as the possibility of any object of the will.

In Schlegel, the abstraction of the Not-I is first encountered as a limiting factor, against which self-positing expansion must exert itself. Self-creation is consequently equally a self-limiting, a necessary conditioning through which finite objects are determined (*bedingt*). According to Schlegel’s theory of the fragment, the creative self reproduces the interaction between the I and the Not-I in such a way that the expansive self-positing produces real individual objects which are, in essence, fragmentary articulations of the (fragmentary) self. Consequently, self-limitation becomes “the highest duty” of the always-creative self “because

one can only limit oneself at those places where one possesses infinite power, infinite self-creation (CF 37)".¹⁸

While adopting the fundamental Fichtean structure of an interaction (*Wechselwirkung*) between the self-positing I and the resistance it encounters in the Not-I, Schlegel releases the movement from its transcendental confines, within individual conscious mind, and ascribes it to nature itself, where, perhaps inspired by F. W. J. Schelling's nascent *Naturphilosophie*,¹⁹ the free self-positing of the I takes place in nature's infinite creativity. The Not-I can therefore occur in Schlegel as the conditioning self-limitation or resistance that the creative impulse of selfhood encounters in order to actually produce its profusion of finite, diverse objects, just as nature does. Of course, as Schelling's philosophy of nature teaches, natural objects are themselves informed with a degree of subjectivity. The same is true of the literary fragments produced in Schlegel. Thus, for Schlegel, "many we call artists are really nature's art (CF 1)". Breaking with Fichte, Schlegel writes in AF 290:

"There is a spiritual (psychical) richness wherever *Geist* manifests itself incessantly or at least makes frequent and new appearances under diverse figures, and not just once, at the beginning, as with many philosophical systems."

In releasing the I from its transcendental confines, Schlegel reciprocally releases the corresponding Not-I from its Fichtean abstraction. Now, the Not-I is free to represent any object "of nature", first, the literary fragment but ultimately that most privileged of "objects", the other self. In other words, Schlegel's appropriation of the Fichtean model anticipates the intersubjectivity that I will further develop below and which I believe is an essential feature of

Romantic psychology. As Schlegel writes in AF 328, “Only one who posits himself may posit others.” Significantly, this statement illustrates the psychological generality of Schlegel’s Romantic selfhood, whose creativity is not the sole purview of that distinct category of individuals we refer to as “artists” but rather is a feature of selfhood in its natural expressiveness. The specific human spiritual endeavors of art and science participate in the general act of “self-limiting [that is] the result of self-creation and self-negation (CF 28).”²⁰

2.2 The Electro-chemical Dynamics of Selfhood

It is true that both Enlightenment faculty-psychology and Romantic psychology conceive of selfhood within general ontologies of nature. They are thus distinguished from Cartesian psychology in that they are tied into and determined by principles acknowledged in the natural sciences. Nonetheless, they are distinguished from each other by the views of nature to which each is beholden. Faculty-psychology is tributary to a mechanistic, materialistic view of nature, as found, for example, in the “anti-metaphysical” ontologies of Fontenelle, Diderot, Louis de Beausobre and J. H. Formey,²¹ while romantic psychology is tributary to a dynamic view of nature, where “force” rather than “matter” provides the fundamental *arche* of the cosmos.

Nonetheless, “force” remains a highly ambiguous term, found in natural sciences as diverse as those of Newtonian physics and mesmerism. The Romantic view of nature and psychology certainly partakes of such ambiguity. My point is not to resolve it but simply to emphasize that Romantic psychology relies on conceptions of force just as today’s phenomenological psychology relies on forms of intentionality or *Sorge*. The error is to simply qualify the underlying forces of Romantic conceptions of nature and the psyche as “occult” and to thereby imply that they are somehow supernatural. While the forces underlying the Romantic conceptions of nature and the psyche may be hidden or invisible, they are very much anchored in

the natural sciences of the time. This point is hard for us to grasp today, mainly because our own experimental-empirical-materialistic view of “science” makes it difficult to take seriously the scientific pretensions of galvanic animal magnetism or centrifugal and centripetal forces. In Schlegel, the natural dynamics at play in creative selfhood are predominantly electro-chemical.

Chemistry is essential to understanding Schlegel’s theory of the fragment, to his idea of *Geist* and to his science of selfhood. As he puts it, in characteristically hyperbolic fashion, “the chemical nature of the roman, of criticism, of *Witz*, of sociality, of modern rhetoric and of history up to now is evident (AF 426)”. Rather than seeing chemistry as a mere metaphor for literary creativity, Schlegel sees it as actually and metonymically present in the dynamic of the literary fragment itself, informing it with its own creative selfhood. However, the dynamic nature of the chemical reactions that power the literary fragment makes sense only if we are sensitive to a crucial aspect of late 18th century chemistry: the galvanic notions of electricity and their relation to organic medicine.

Although it is true that 18th century chemistry was fascinated by the combinations and elective affinities between chemical elements, it was also “mesmerized” by the contemporary discovery that chemical reactions could produce electrical energy, whose effects could be empirically witnessed in the dissected nervous and muscular fibers of animal organisms. Recognizing the importance of such galvanic notions allows us see how, for Schlegel, the “universal, progressive poetry” he calls Romantic (AF 116) and which I believe is best understood as *Geist* (spirit/mind), is actually powered by electrochemical forces. Further, the galvanic (electrical) aspect of chemical reactions allows the fragment to transcend chemistry and attain the organic. If “the chemical epoch should be followed by an organic epoch” and if history has been chemical in nature only “up to now (AF 426)”, it is because chemical reactions are now

known to produce electricity. Of course, chemical galvanism is aesthetically and psychologically importable for Schlegel because it corresponds to the fundamental Fichtean paradigm of self-expansion and limitation that I outlined above, while further cohering with the popular theory of organic medicine put forward by John Brown, which I will discuss below.

The self-positing creative force and its corollary resistance from the Not-I informs the literary fragment and is more generally a feature of Romantic natural science, where expansion and limitation are omnipresent. In astronomy, the interplay of expansive centrifugal and limiting centripetal forces maintains planetary movement in constant orbits. In chemistry, acids and bases interact, creating new elements. Similarly, both magnetism and electricity are dynamic phenomena implying the existence of two opposing poles. At the organic level, the one Schlegel sees as animating the Romantic epoch (AF 426) and its productions of genius (AF 366), the lively nature of self-position and determinant limitation is manifest in the discovery of chemically produced electricity and the production of “Witz”.

The insight into electrochemistry and its enigmatic relation to organic life, stemming from the work of Luigi Galvani, was conveyed to Schlegel by the brilliant, self-taught apothecary Johann Wilhelm Ritter. Ritter published his book *Proof That, in the Animal Kingdom, a Constant Galvanism Accompanies the Life Process* in 1798, at 22 years of age. The book reprised his lecture at the Natural History Society in Jena, the year before, which had created such a stir that Ritter was offered a professorship at the university. Schlegel was so taken with the young physicist, introduced to the *Athenäum* circle by Novalis, that he intended to invite him to formally collaborate on the journal.

Briefly, Ritter produced a new theory that the electricity observed in Galvani’s animal experiments was actually chemical in nature, produced through chemical reactions created by the

differences in the types of metal brought into contact with the muscles or nerves. Ritter presented these findings to the Jena scientific community in the above-mentioned lecture (1797, the year Schlegel produced his first series of fragments), drawing further conclusions in his 1799 article “Some Observations on Galvanism in Inorganic Nature and the Relationship between Electricity and the Chemical Quality of Bodies.” Here, Ritter helps liberate chemical electricity from its animal confines and shows how it is generated through a chemical process of oxidation and reduction, involving two polarized metals in a confined space, paving the way for his invention of the dry-cell battery in 1800.

Happily, Ritter’s ideas on the chemical nature of electricity can be considered complementary to the Fichteian paradigm described above. Like other natural phenomena, chemically generated electricity follows the same logic that Schlegel had found in the interaction between the I and the Not-I. The juxtaposition of two different metals can be considered a case of self-positing and self-limitation through opposition, bringing about a conditioned, real result: electrical energy. Ritter’s electrochemical theory, however, adds another significant element to the theory of the production of electricity, beyond the fact of productive opposition. The heterogeneous elements (metals) are necessarily brought together in a discrete, enclosed space (eventually, the battery), in a state of conductive compression where chemical reactions take place in a spontaneous manner. Electrical sparks fly as the result of the fortuitous, internal chemical interactions that the compression produces. The natural rhythm of expansion and conditioning resistance, together with discrete compression, the interaction of different self-positing/self-limiting elements and the resultant electrical discharge are the fundamental markers of Schlegel’s theory and practice of the literary fragment, and consequently, of his psychology. Wit and irony are operational concepts in both.

Of course, neither the molecular nor indeed the atomic nature of these interactions was understood at the time. Electricity could not yet be grasped as the flow of charged electrons or ions, interactions which indeed remained, at the time, occult or hidden. Rather, the productive chemical combinations that Ritter and others saw as a source of electrical current were conceived according to the reigning model of the day: static electricity produced by the rubbing together of individual objects. In other words, the interactions that take place through the chemical combinations were understood as producing electrical energy through friction. However, such molecular misunderstanding of the actual nature of the electrical force produced makes it particularly pertinent in its psychological application. The chemistry of Schlegel's early Romantic period relied on the combinatory nature of diverse elements, where the "friction" of their chemical encounters, brought about by their "free sociality (CF 34)" within an enclosed space, produced an electrical outcome, the spontaneous production of electrical force in the form of *Witz*.

The difficulty readers have in defining what exactly Schlegel means by the crucial concept of irony²² makes it tempting to blur its definition with that of wit, which tends to be seen simply as an expression or type of the former. In fact, the two terms refer to concepts with distinct technical meanings that become clearer in light of the electrochemical framework discussed above. Accordingly, irony should be understood as the created, one might say engineered, compressive encounter between the self and its self-differenced Other. It is a "form" that is inherently "paradoxical (CF 48)", and as such, it "contains and excites the feeling of the insoluble conflict between the unconditioned and the conditioned . . . (CF 108)". Or again, "[irony is] an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the constant self-engendering exchange between two conflicting thoughts (AF 121)".

If we are attentive to Schlegel's definitions, we see that wit is distinctly presented as an electrical "explosion" that results from ironic compression (CF 90). Thus, the forced friction of heterogeneous elements that takes place in irony fills the imagination "with all sorts of life before the electrifying moment can happen" and gives forth "brilliant sparks, lustrous rays or thunderbolts (CF 34)". Drawing on the Fichtean and galvanic structures of Romantic selfhood outlined above reveals how Schlegel understands irony in its relation to wit. Irony can be defined as a mechanism of compression, where opposing chemical elements are put in contact, in such a way that they interact and spontaneously generate wit, which occurs as an electrical discharge. The dynamic production of electrical wit takes place within the formal limitations of the written fragment, which is, ironically, both the condition for the production of wit and the conditioned product of the process. Simply put, fragmentary wit produces new (witty) fragments.

Of course, this is also how wit is produced in society, in the interaction between "fragmentary" selves, and Schlegel understands wit as inherently sociable, not in a vertical, hierarchical fashion but rather "horizontally," as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari use the term in their *Anti-Oedipus*. Salon society, like irony, is a compression of intersubjectivity, bringing together and combining diverse elements in a confined space; one thinks of the Berlin salon culture of Henriette Herz and Rahel Levin, where, in that propitious year of 1797, Schlegel met his future wife, Dorothea Veit, encountered Ritter, developed his cherished ideal of *Symphilosophie*, and began writing fragments! Practically, the symphilosophical ideal involved the combining of different selves in the relatively confined space of the *Athenäum* circle, stirring together Schelling, Schleiermacher, August Ludwig Hülsen, Franz Xavier von Baader, Johann Ludwig Tieck, Novalis, and others. This is the dynamism of the "combinatory art" Schlegel refers to in some of his fragments, a literal social alchemy, ironically combining diverse elements of selfhood which then interact in a

frictional, fortuitous way, producing sparks of wit.²³ The collaborative journal *Athenäum* is the fragmentary manifestation of this social chemistry, and the soul of the journal is, of course, the fragment.

The fragment is both the self-limiting figure implied by free, creative expansion and the privileged space of ironic compression for the production of electrochemical wit. The duality of this role, as both product and productive, as both a result and a condition, means the fragment participates in the universal progression of *Geist*. The fragment is thus a “world” in itself (I 213), or as Schlegel writes in AF 383, ironically echoing Immanuel Kant’s systematic aspirations in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, wit should be “architectonic”. Thus, the fragmentary system is not likened to universal science but to the prickly hedgehog (AF 206), a singular organism that invites the caress but should never be fully grasped. Indeed, we can say that as both self-positing and self-limiting, as both fragmentary and systematic, the fragment is an ironic system. As such, it is alive on an organic level, one that incorporates and goes beyond the internal electrochemical forces of its constituents (AF 426) to form a living, engendering organism. It is an individual form of “nature’s art (CF 1)”. Schlegel’s fragment should not therefore be seen as the savant construction of the artistic genius but rather as the creative, productive, organically constituted embodiment of the I. In observing, or “reading” the fragment, we gain phenomenological knowledge of the Romantic self and its psychology as an ironic system.

To understand the organic quality of selfhood as an ironic system, we must take a brief look at how the electrochemical dimension of Schlegel’s theory and practice of the fragment draws from a theory of medicine that was popular at the time. More precisely, reference to John Brown’s theory of organic life allows us to see how fragmentary psychology involves the full

determination of the once abstract Not-I, not only as an instance of ironic self-limitation but as a stimulating other self.

2.3 The Stimulating Not-I

Endlessly dynamic, the universal, progressive Romantic poem (*Geist*) is, of course, itself self-contradictory, alive in the ironic compression of system and fragment. The living, organic nature of such systematic incompleteness implies a particular relation to the otherness that lies outside itself, to a Not-I that is more than a self-imposed limitation. Otherness actually participates in the organic constitution of the system as a form of stimulation that solicits the essential positing of the self. The relation between an (always incomplete) organic system and the otherness of its environment is generally speaking the subject matter of medicine. In Schlegel's Romantic psychology, otherness takes the form of other people, and in the self-creative context of the literary fragment, the critical reader. To understand stimulating otherness, I want to look briefly at John Brown's theory of organic life and medicine, and its notion of stimulation. The reference shows how the electrochemical nature of wit, drawing upon the dialectic of the Fichtean self and its Other, fuels a process of *Geist* that is alive and reproductive.

Scottish physician John Brown's theory was much in vogue in Germany following the translation of his work in 1795. Brown's ideas responded to a general requirement of the time: the need to find a unique principle of organic medicine that was as universal as Newton's laws of force. Although its applications and diagnostics were doubtlessly arcane and often dangerous—for example, Schelling's "Brunonian" treatment of the young Augusta Böhmer in Jena seems to have led to her death—Brown's theory itself was painfully simple. Animal vitality (health) is seen as dependent on a level of organic excitability. Excitability represents the degree to which

an organism can react to external stimulus. Highly excitable states bring about sthenic pathologies, while asthenic conditions are characterized by weakness and lethargy. Most diseases are considered asthenic, and consequently, treatment involves increased levels of stimulation, for example through such external agents as red meat, alcohol, and laudanum. These external stimuli are meant to solicit a response from the patient. In some cases, indirect asthenic pathologies may arise as a result of over-stimulation. Such conditions require what may be described as a homeopathic treatment where depressants are administered to the depressed (asthenic) patient in order to solicit the contrary response and provoke vital excitability. Brown's theory sees life as a fragile, ephemeral state of excitation, only temporarily and uncertainly held from stillness and dissolution through the imperfect intervention of external, stimulating agents.²⁴

When applied to the Fichtean conceptual structure, Brown's idea of organic vitality as the capacity for external stimulation adds a new distinguishing characteristic to the increasingly determinate Not-I. Rather than being seen as a general limiting condition through which a specific self-positing I becomes effective or the further condition of ironic compression necessary for the production of electrical wit, the Not-I now plays the active, determined role of a particular stimulus that actually solicits and excites the self-positing of the I. Applied to the organic, living entity the characterizes both the fragment and the self that produces it, Brown's paradigm leads to the recognition that otherness has an actual role in creative self-expression, adding the real quality of reciprocal selfhood to Schlegel's appropriation of the hitherto faceless Not-I. Such stimulating otherness can now be seen as a "sense of chaos outside the system" (I 55), "from which a world may spring" (I 213), where "the excitation of the smallest contact, friend or enemy" draws forth "brilliant sparks, lustrous rays or thunderbolts" (CF 34). The not-I

is now the exciting other, the “thou” for whom s/he lives and creates, and who can never fully comprehend or grasp the ironic system of selfhood.²⁵

When superimposed on Ritter’s electrochemical discoveries, Brown’s idea that life results from external solicitation adds a rich, intersubjective dimension to the concept of limiting ironic compression, which can now be seen as a form of otherness that stimulates the psychological vitality of the creative self. Together, these elements underlie Schlegel’s symphilosophical *Athenäum* project and constitute his theory and practice of the literary fragment.²⁶ Given these elements, Schlegel’s conception of Romantic selfhood is perhaps best summarized in ironic, existentialist terms: it is a living, systematic fragment, transcendently universal and yet solicited by an otherness that is never attained.

3. The Specificity of Romantic Psychology

In attempting to specify Romantic psychology through its actualized embodiment in Schlegel’s literary fragment here, in summary, is what we have discovered.

- A. Romantic psychology relies on the Fichtean paradigm of the self-positing I, along with the acknowledgement of a self-limiting not-I.
- B. Romantic psychology conceives of the self-positing I in terms of natural forces, which are universal in scope and application. In Schlegel, these forces are electro-chemical, productive of *Witz*.

- C. Romantic psychology conceives of the limiting not-I as organically related to the self-positing I. For Schlegel, the not-I is the stimulating Other, the “chaos outside the system”, that makes the system possible.

Having thus specified Romantic psychology, the question arises as to whether our findings can be generalized, i.e. discovered in other contemporaneous Romantic figures. While I do not have the time nor space to explore this adequately, here are a few potential lineaments for Romantic psychologies that might be investigated in Schlegel’s principle collaborators at the *Athenaeum* journal: Novalis and Schleiermacher.

3.1 Novalis

The self-positing I is an obvious feature of Novalis’ thought. In his “Logological Fragments”, for example, he clearly puts forward a view where Poesie appears as the result of the I’s initial voyage of compressive inner discovery (philosophy), in an expansive, externalized verb by which nature is poeticized. Such essential, poetical self-positing allows us to view the self as it is read in the marvelous phenomena of nature. The dynamic aspect that we discovered in Schlegel’s view of electro-chemical *Witz* may be more difficult to identify in Novalis, although he clearly sees nature as inscribed with vital forces, which extend beyond the organic realm into the very heart of geological “life”, as we see in *Henry of Ofterdingen*. Clearly, his vision of the psyche and nature is dynamic, driven by forces, and not mechanical. In fact, the enchanted visions of Novalis’s writings, perhaps best witnessed in his *Hymns to the Night*, where, prostrated on Sophie’s tomb, he experiences the vision of her resurrection, are just the sort of unbidden representations that Enlightenment psychology seeks to explain! Finally, the Brunonian aspect that we identified in Schlegel as the enlivening solicitation of other selves may

be fruitfully explored in Novalis's idea of the mediator, which may take the form of the Christ, of Sophie or of any natural object capable of inspiring the poetical verb. The mediator solicits the self to embark on its own voyage of inner discovery, realized in the poeticization of nature.

3.2 Schleiermacher

In the first edition (1799) of Schleiermacher's *Discourses on Religion to its Cultured Despisers*, "intuition" might certainly be grasped, according to his definition of religion as an individual "intuition of the universe", as an active self-positing that embraces the cosmos. The ambiguous treatment given to corresponding "Gefühl", defined in more passive, intimate terms, may be viewed as a form of self-limitation: the reciprocal agency of the universe impressing itself on the individual, sensitive self. Intuition and feeling share a clearly dynamic character, partaking of universal force and eschewing the mechanistic Enlightenment paradigm. As well, Schleiermacher's intuition posits itself in specific, finite forms: natural science, art, morality and metaphysical philosophy are all fragmentary expressions of religion qua intuition of the universe. In Schleiermacher, the stimulating not-I can either be ascribed to his theory of mediators as stimulating human guides who have experienced and recognized the true nature of religion or, perhaps better still, witnessed in his second-person evocation of religion's "cultured despisers" to whom the *Discourses* are addressed.

Conclusion: Romantic Psychology's Legacy

Taken together, the above-mentioned criteria in A, B and C imply that Romantic psychology actually takes place in and through the "fruits" of the self. In other words, just as Schlegel's *Seelenkunde* is discoverable in his theory and practice of the literary fragment, as a self-creative ironic system in living relation to other selves, other examples of Romantic psychology are

observable in and through their productions. Romantic psychology can therefore faithfully be described as phenomenological, where the science of the self is, above all, descriptive of human behaviors. As such, it is not reliant upon the elaboration of inner mechanisms, which today often take the form of neuroscientific explanations, where certain, loosely defined neuropathways and “hardwirings” are meant to explain the production of pathologies (unbidden representations). In the broadest, historical sense, Romantic psychology opened the door to modern psychoanalysis, through the pioneering work of such practitioners as Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), whose nosography of mental pathologies are descriptive and who initiated the ground-breaking psychological approach that involved actually talking to and listening to “alienated” patients.

Pinel’s humanistic methods can be juxtaposed with the Enlightenment’s more mechanical approach, which often involved cruel manipulations of the body in order to bring about “cures” to mental pathologies, an approach that perhaps may be the ancestor of overly pharmaceutical trends in psychotherapy. Conversely, the talking cure becomes possible when the patient’s pronouncements are taken as more than senseless ravings. They are meaningful to the extent that they are expressions of the self, solicited by the “stimulating Other”, here, the psychoanalyst. Today, we seem caught between the two paradigms. Defining pathological states through their specific behaviors and discourses is the approach favored by today’s principal handbook of psychiatry, the famous *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. However, the treatments proposed there generally rely on drugs rather than the talking cure.

Perhaps most obviously, psychoanalytical hermeneutics (Freudian, Jungian, Lacanian...) is inspired by Romantic psychology. As we have hopefully seen through our discussion of Schlegel’s theory and practice of the literary fragment, the Other’s interpretation of the “work” is

always psychoanalytical and psychoanalysis is endlessly hermeneutical. Indeed, one of Freud's early writings on interpretation (1905) is entitled, "Witz and its relations with the unconscious".

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¹ Of course, I am not presenting Flatt's course or even the German Enlightenment as the exclusive and actual "beginning" of psychology. Reflections on *Seelenkunde* and *Seelenlehre*, as the discipline of *Psychologie* was also referred to in the late *Aufklärung*, are, of course, present in Aristotle, Aquinas, and again in the classical thought of Hobbes, Descartes, Leibniz etc. However, by the mid-18th Century, thinkers associated with the Enlightenment were putting forward a new vision for the scientific study of the "soul", one that promotes "psychology" as distinctly non-metaphysical, i.e. divorced from both its theological dimensions and the early Modern emphasis on a priori enquiry into the self. The self-consciously anti-metaphysical efforts of late-Enlightenment psychology explains one sense of the term "empirical" that was then attached to the proposed method. The other sense refers to the "empirical" aesthetic mental faculties taken from Kant's first *Critique* as the basis for faculty-psychology. Nonetheless, since the Enlightenment's empirical conception of the mind rests on materialistic principles of causation that are universally attributed to both mind and nature, its foundation is "metaphysical", as is the case with Romantic psychology's reliance on the universal ontology of "forces". In other words, it may well be the case that any general conception of the mind involves metaphysical principles and the attempt to thoroughly define psychological science in opposition to metaphysics is misguided. Rather, one might more productively work to show how the metaphysical principles underlying Enlightenment and Romantic psychologies are different from each other and yet share a mutual opposition of Cartesian metaphysics, where the laws of the mind are a priori and thus exclusive of natural determination.

² See Reid, 2013.

³ Hegel, G.W.F., GW I, pp. 483 – 487.

⁴ Hoffmeister (ed.) 1974, p. 453. The course was officially listed as either "empiricam psychologicam" or "Psych. empiricam" in the Tübingen course calendar. GW I, pp. 484 – 85.

⁵ Beiser, 1987, p. 210.

⁶ "Reactionary" is from Beiser, p. 11. The supernaturalism of Storr/Flatt used Kant's first critique in a tendentious way: Because the noumenal realm is beyond empirical knowledge, its content must be known by Revelation.

⁷ In other words, while he was preparing his lectures on empirical psychology, he wrote his *Fragmentarische Beyträge zur Bestimmung und Deduktion des Begriffs und Grundsätze der Causalität* and the *Briefe über den moralischen Erkenntnisgrund der Religion*. See Beiser, 1987, p.211- 14.

⁸ Flatt's Enlightenment conception of the mind as "empirical" can nonetheless claim to be non-metaphysical to the extent that it rests on mechanistic, deterministic principles of causation. Of course, to the extent that these are universally attributed to both mind and nature they can be called metaphysical. Similarly, Romantic psychology's reliance on the universal ontology of "forces" may be equally qualified as "metaphysical". In fact, it may well be the case that any general conception of the mind involves metaphysical principles and the attempt to thoroughly define psychological science in opposition to metaphysics is misguided. Rather, one might more productively work to show how the metaphysical principles underlying Enlightenment and romantic psychologies are different from each

other and yet share a mutual opposition of Cartesian metaphysics, where the laws of the mind are strictly a priori and thus exclusive of natural determination.

⁹ It is true that the manuscript also employs the term “Kraft”, which can likewise be translated as “faculty”, as we see from the usual translation of Kant’s Critique of “Urteilkraft”. However, “Kraft” retains a dynamic dimension of “force” and “power” which should be distinguished from the more passive, mechanical, representational operation of the *Vermögen*. Indeed, to the extent that Kant’s notion of “Urteil” is thoroughly positive, “faculty” is perhaps not the best translation for its “power”. The same is perhaps the case with Kant’s conception of power of the imagination.

¹⁰ All mental phenomena must be explained in terms of rational thinking, which explains, pace Foucault and Derrida, why Descartes so summarily dismisses the madness hypothesis in the first Meditation. A thoroughly rational self cannot brook conditions of “déraison”, which must be ascribed to a hypothetical “malin génie.” Leibnizian metaphysical psychology is equally confined. The soul as a monad that is ultimately reducible to perception and appetite, and which has no window onto other souls, cannot provide a rich explanation for a variety of “irrational” states.

¹¹ I have shown in my “How the Dreaming Soul...” that at least some of the material that Flatt draws upon is from C. P. Moritz’s *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, a popular review published in Berlin between 1783 and 1793. Although the *Magazin* regularly presents speculations on the nature of the soul, most of the volumes are dedicated to recounting testimonials of dreams, nightmares, somnambulism, as well as what we might call parapsychological or even paranormal experiences. Most significantly, the *Magazin* then brings these cases into the realm of scientific explanation, debunking them, one might say, by presenting them in terms of pathology, in order that we may reasonably know those aspects of the self that seem to lie beyond reason. The often colorful, highly subjective anecdotes and accounts are the stuff of empirical psychology or empirical anthropology, in the sense of the journal’s scientific concept of *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*. Flatt’s 1789/90 lectures on empirical psychology were certainly inspired by the *Magazin*’s late Enlightenment mission of using “modern” anthropology to show that the excess of *Phantasie*, and particularly, the manifestations of *Schwärmerei*, are pathological conditions of the soul. In this light, it should be no surprise that Moses Mendelssohn served as an early advisor to the review. The full title of the *Magazin* is actually, *Gnothi sauton* (in Greek letters = know yourself) *oder Magazin zur...* etc. See the informative doctoral thesis on the *Magazin* by Kim, Soo-Jung (2001). On Mendelssohn, see p. 15. Another late Enlightenment figure is pivotal in the understanding of mental illness as a struggle between reason and unreason: Kant’s well-read “*Von der Macht des Gemüths durch den blossen Vorsatz seiner krankhaften Gefühle Meister zu sein*”, published in periodicals in 1796, and again in his *Conflict of the Faculties*. One might also refer to Kant’s pre-critical (1770) essay “*Versuch über die Krankheiten des Kopfes*” in this light.

¹² It is not sufficient to specify Romantic psychology as unique and original based solely on the fact that it postulates the inter-penetration of mind and nature, where “the manifestations of the natural world and the structures and concepts of the human mind correspond harmoniously” (Barkhoff, 2009, p. 210). For the same interpenetration and harmony between psyche and nature can be observed in the Enlightenment view where both are conceived as thoroughly materialistic and mechanical.

¹³ In the history of ideas, it is tempting to locate one source of Romantic psychology in Herder, specifically in his theory of artistic genius as articulated in his essay, “The Causes of Sunken Taste Among those Peoples Where it had Once Blossomed” (1773). In its opening discussion of Seelenlehre, the essay puts forward a notion of the self whose genius is animated by “a mass of powers (*Kräfte*)”, thus distinguishing his vision from the mechanistic Enlightenment view. It is significant that Herder’s essay won the Academy of Berlin prize, the institution where, several decades earlier, thinkers like Louis de Beausobre and Johann Heinrich Formey had enjoyed success for their arch-Enlightenment work in materialistic “Empirical Psychology”. Herder, SW 5, pp. 600-01. I owe the reference to Beausobre and Formey to Daniel Dumouchel’s presentation at the Canadian Philosophical Association (2018) in Montreal, at a workshop (with Christian Leduc) on philosophy at the Academy of Berlin. The reference to Herder’s essay also came from the same workshop, thanks to a presentation by Nigel de Souza.

¹⁴ For a more detailed account, s. Reid, 2008, pp. 1-16.

¹⁵ See Reid, 2014.

¹⁶ Hegel reduces the Fichtean aspect of Schlegel’s thought to individualistic solipsism. See Reid, 2014, pp. 8-49. Cf. Judith Norman, 2000 and 2007.

¹⁸ Schlegel’s fragments occur in three different sets: the Critical Fragments (CF), published in the journal *Lyceum* in 1797; the *Athenäum* Fragments (AF), published in *Athenäum* in 1798; and the Ideas (I), appearing in the same journal in 1800. The translated fragments can be found in Firchow, 1971. The translations in this article are my own, although they are informed by Firchow’s. For the German s. KA 17.

¹⁸ “A poem is just an object of nature that seeks to become a work of art” (CF 21).

¹⁹ Schelling taught at Jena until 1800 and was involved with the *Athenäum* circle, contributing his polemical poem (against Schleiermacher) “The Epicurean Confession of Heinz Widerporst” and marrying August Wilhelm Schlegel’s ex-wife, Caroline. Schelling’s *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature* was published in Jena in 1799.

²⁰ The question of negativity as it relates to selfhood in German Idealism and Romanticism certainly merits its own study. Here, I believe we can take it as derived from the Spinozistic idea that relates negation to determination. If every determination is a negation, then self-determination is a self-limiting self-negating. Briefly, to be something is not to be something else.

²¹ See note 15 above.

²² For example, Steven E. Alford writes, “Critics have despaired of finding a single meaning to Schlegel’s term ‘irony.’” Alford, 1984, p. 17. Alford quotes Walter Benjamin, who makes the same assertion.

²³ In fact, Schlegel seems to have delighted in engineering possibilities of personal opposition within the group, for example attempting to confront Schleiermacher’s religiosity with Schelling’s Epicurean confessions.

²⁴ See Neubauer, 1967, pp. 367-82. As Neubauer shows, both Schelling and Novalis were also fascinated and influenced by Brown’s ideas, but only because the philosophers were able to interpret the material relation between excitability (life) and foreign stimulation as a Fichtean relation between the I and the Not-I. Neubauer, 1967, pp. 375–6. In fact, as Neubauer also points out, both philosophers react strongly against the perceived mechanical nature of Brown’s theory of medicine when left on its own.

²⁵ See Schlegel’s essay “On Incomprehensibility” in which he writes: “I wanted to show that the purest incomprehension emanates precisely from science and the arts—which by their very nature aim at comprehension and at making comprehensible—and from philosophy and philology.” Further on: “Everything is going to become more and more critical, and artists can already begin to cherish the just hope that humanity will at last rise up in a mass and learn to read”. Firchow, 1971 pp. 260- 61.

²⁶ Perhaps the most poignant expression of this dialectic is found in *Lucinde*, in the section, “A Dithyrambic Fantasy on the Loveliest Situation in the World,” in which Julius evokes for Lucinde their “wittiest and most beautiful” moment, when, in their love-making, they exchange roles, thus creating “a wonderful, deeply meaningful allegory of the development of man and woman to full and complete humanity”. Firchow, 1971, p. 49.