SCHLEGEL'S DEBT TO SCHILLER'S CONCEPT OF THE SENTIMENTAL

ELIZABETH E. BOHNING *

The purpose of this article is to indicate how Schiller's theory of the sentimental, as expounded in the essay *Ueber naive und sentimentale Dichtung* stimulated Schlegel to study the concept and gradually to reach his own interpretation. Applying Schiller's stylistic antithesis to literary periods, he adopts his classification of poetic types and builds directly upon his designation of the sentimental as infinite and his demand for detachment on the part of the artist. However, with Schlegel's introduction of the terms 'interesting' and 'all-embracing' into the definition of 'modern' art his theory branches off sharply from Schiller's and becomes the basis of German Romantic art. His interpretation of the historical development of modern art is summarized as he sets it forth in 1800. The instigation to develop it he owes largely to Schiller's praise of sentimental poetry.

Schiller differentiates between two species of poetry, the naive and the sentimental. The former belongs to a people or poet at one with nature, a people or poet in whom the harmony of reason and feeling, of art and nature, has never been destroyed. Sentimental poetry, on the other hand, is an expression of the yearning for the harmony of the natural state felt by the man who has lost the unity of reason and feeling.¹

Schiller's contrast between naive and sentimental style reappears in Schlegel's criticism as the contrast between periods in literary history, as the antithesis between 'antik' and 'modern.'²

It is "remarkably gratifying" to Schlegel to find that Schiller attributes an interest in the reality of the ideal to the sentimental poet: Schiller asserts that culture should strive to realize its ideal, that is, to bring about a return of art, of consummated art, to nature.³ He insists upon the closest connection between the moral and the sentimental, maintaining that only the moral being is capable of regretting

* Department of Modern Languages and Literatures.

¹ F. Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke* (Säkular-Ausgabe), v. 12, pp. 179 ff.
the loss of the natural state.⁴ Pleasure in nature is not esthetic, but moral, for it is mediated by an idea, not produced immediately through contemplation: we are attracted not by the objects in nature themselves, but by the idea, the harmony, which they represent. And this idea, this harmony, we are striving to regain.⁵ Schlegel, too, regards this interest in the reality of the ideal as typical of sentimental poetry. His statement that the truly sentimental presupposes reflection concerning the relationship between the ideal and the real ⁶ is reminiscent of Schiller.

Schiller differentiates three types of poetry concerning the relationship between the ideal and the real, nature and art. The satire treats, according to his theory, the contradiction between reality and the ideal. The elegy is an expression of pleasure in nature as opposed to art, in the ideal as opposed to reality. The idyll unites ideal and actuality, nature and art.⁷

In an Athenäum fragment Schlegel offers precisely the same classification: 1) satire stresses the absolute difference between nature and art; 2) the elegy represents the intermediate stage; 3) the idyll stresses the absolute identity of nature and art.⁸

Schiller's theories as expressed in Ueber naive und sentimentale Dichtung are clearly the spring-board to Schlegel's unattainable infinite. An essential difference between modern and ancient literature is according to Schiller the infinity of the former as opposed to the finite character of the latter. The goal of modern man, he says, is progress, development. Because his ideal is an infinite one which he can never attain, because the development can always proceed further, the man of culture can never reach consumption as can the man of nature. However, the goal of the man of culture is infinitely superior to that of the man of nature: "Der eine erhält also seinen Wert durch absolute Erreichung einer endlichen, der andere erlangt ihn durch Annäherung zu einer unendlichen Grösse."⁹

In Klassik und Romantik Strich explains that eternity ('Ewigkeit') may mean either consummation ('Vollendung') or endlessness ('Unendlichkeit'). The former implies being ('Sein') and the latter becoming ('Werden').¹⁰ The goal of the Romanticist is endless, un-

⁴ Ibid., p. 178.
⁵ Ibid., p. 162.
⁷ Schiller, op. cit., pp. 194 ff.
⁸ Minor, op. cit., p. 242.
⁹ Schiller, op. cit., pp. 189 f.
¹⁰ F. Strich, Deutsche Klassik und Romantik, p. 13.
attainable. He is therefore constantly striving, and this constant striving Schlegel calls progressive. Modern poetry is likewise a progressive poetry, a poetry of ‘Werden,’ not, like ancient poetry, of ‘Sein.’

The essence of Romantic poetry is expressed in Schlegel’s famous 116th fragment:

“Die romantische Dichtung ist unter den Künsten was der Witz der Philosophie, und die Gesellschaft, Umgang, Freundschaft und Liebe im Leben ist. Andere Dichtarten sind fertig, und können nun vollständig zergliedert werden. Die romantische Dichtart ist noch im Werden; ja das ist ihr eigentliches Wesen, dass sie ewig nur werden und nur eine divinatorische Kritik dürfte es wagen, ihr Ideal charakterisieren zu wollen.”

A. W. Schlegel attempts to popularize the theories of his brother. He emphasizes that the ancients represent finite reality and consummate form. To Greek art he attributes complete harmony, a ‘Seelig in sich selbst sein.’ Consummate art, he says, lies apart from the eternal flux of life. The endless striving characteristic of the modern period meant the destruction of the ancient harmony. The yearning associated with the Christian hope for immortality introduced this eternal striving into both art and life.

A. W. Schlegel’s thought that the ancient/modern contrast is particularly striking in architecture recurs in the works of a modern poet, in the “Standbildern—den beiden ersten” of Stefan George. There we find a picture of the Greek temple, not higher than the landscape itself, bounded by the landscape. Everything is clear; we feel everywhere an intense, exulting joy in living. Service in the temple is a pleasure in itself. On the other hand, the Gothic cathedral strives upward from the landscape. The Christian scism between body and mind has brought about a new interpretation of service: service no longer represents pleasure ‘per se’ but a hope for redemption.

The Romanticist is willing to recognize no limitations. He aspires to endlessness. However, nothing finite can achieve endlessness. The absolute cannot be reached in finite life. The Romanticist, therefore, deeply aware of the chasm between the ideal and the real, the endless and the finite, or, as Strich expresses it, between

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11 Minor, op. cit., v. 1, p. 111.
12 Ibid., v. 2, pp. 195 ff.
13 Ibid., p. 220.
14 A. W. Schlegel, Sämtliche Werke (Weidmann’sche Buchhandlung), v. 5, pp. 11 ff.
15 Ibid., p. 18.
reason and fancy,\textsuperscript{16} regards life as merely an illusion. He cannot, moreover, bring himself to say with Goethe:

"So bleibe denn die Sonne mir im Rücken!
Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben." \textsuperscript{17}

He can content himself with no reflection of the sun but only with the sun itself: he is striving to experience the universal directly, not merely through its manifestations in the particular. Irony, springing from Fichte’s theory of intellectual perception, is the solution of the Romantic period: through constant awareness of the inadequacy of the finite the Romanticist transcends the limits of his understanding.\textsuperscript{18} Huch suggests ‘Geistesfreiheit’ as the best synonym of ‘Ironie.’\textsuperscript{19} The artist must be able to regard his own work with detachment even as he is creating it. “Wir müssen uns über unsere eigne Liebe erheben, und was wir anbeten, in Gedanken vernichten können: sonst fehlt uns, was wir auch für andere Fähigkeiten haben, der Sinn für das Weltall.”\textsuperscript{20}

Sitz\textsuperscript{21} stresses the relationship between Romantic irony and Schiller’s demand that we retain while contemplating art the same detachment, the same freedom from overwhelming emotion, which we experience while participating in a game.

A fundamental difference between ancient and modern poetry consists, according to Fr. Schlegel, in this so-called Romantic irony, a characteristic completely lacking in Greek poetry.\textsuperscript{22} He says in his \textit{Lyceumsfragmenten}: “Mein Versuch über das Studium der griechischen Poesie ist ein manieriirter Hymnus in Prosa auf das Objektive in der Poesie. Das Schlechteste daran scheint mir der gänzliche Mangel der unentbehrlichen Ironie.”\textsuperscript{23}

Schlegel believes he finds examples of irony in Goethe’s \textit{Wilhelm Meister}:

“man lasse sich also dadurch, dass der Dichter selbst die Personen und die Begebenheiten so leicht und so launig zu nehmen, den Helden fast nie ohne Ironie zu erwähnen, und auf sein Meisterwerk selbst von der Höhe seines Geistes herabzulächeln scheint, nicht täuschen, als sey es ihm nicht der heiligste Ernst.”\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{16} Strich, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 13 ff. \\
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Faust} 4715, 4727. \\
\textsuperscript{18} Cf. O. Walzel, \textit{German Romanticism}, p. 24. \\
\textsuperscript{19} R. Huch, \textit{Die deutsche Romantik}, p. 279. \\
\textsuperscript{20} Minor, \textit{op. cit.}, v. 2, p. 169. \\
\textsuperscript{21} W. Sitz, \textit{Early German Romanticism}, pp. 179 f. \\
\textsuperscript{22} Minor, \textit{op. cit.}, v. 2, p. 190. \\
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 184. \\
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 171.
Life for the Romanticist demands whole-hearted participation and at the same time the detachment which we experience while watching a play. Schlegel says: "wir fodern, dass die Begebenheiten, die Menschen, kurz das ganze Spiel des Lebens wirklich auch als Spiel genommen und dargestellt sey."  25

The interpretation of life as a theater has a tremendous appeal for all Romanticists. For Novalis "das Theater ist die tätige Reflexion des Menschen über sich selbst."  26

The poet who regards life as a play devaluates it, and from this devaluation springs the pessimism, the scepticism, the self-parody of Romanticism.  27 Perhaps the best example of self-parody as a form of irony occurs in Tieck's Gestiefeltem Kater, where the actors rise mentally above the play and laugh down at their own acting even as they act.

In their stress upon the reality of the ideal and their classification of literary forms Schlegel and Schiller travel a common road, and the infinity of Schiller's sentimental leads Schlegel to describe modern art as progressive. Moreover, Schiller's demand for "Gemütsfreiheit" may, as Silz assumes, have exerted some influence on the concept of irony which Schlegel develops out of Fichte's doctrine of intellectual perception. In the preface to his Greeks and Romans  28 Fr. Schlegel recognizes the stimulating influence of Schiller's theories upon his own interpretation of art, and in his essay On the Study of Greek Poetry (1797) he even expresses his sincere admiration for Schiller, accrediting him with having imparted to German poetry "stärkere Kraft und höheren Schwung."  29

However, it is evident that even at this early date the course of Schlegel's thinking is beginning to deviate from Schiller's. The personal hostility between the two men springs from an essential difference in their philosophies of life. The Romantic critic, a student of Fichte, is alienated primarily by the dualism which Schiller inherited from Kant:

"Gebt der gemeinen Kunst so viel Würde und so viel Anmuth als Ihr wollt: es wird nie die höhere daraus werden. Oder glaubt Ihr, dass ein mächtiger Baum aus Hülsen ohne Kern und Kraft emporkwachsen könne? Und Ihr mögt noch so

25 Ibid., pp. 296, 364.
26 Novalis, Werke (Hesse und Becker Verlag), p. 156.
27 Minor, op. cit., v. 2, p. 198.
28 Ibid., v. 1, p. 79.
29 Ibid., p. 177.
sehr auf die Absonderung der Natur und der Kunst dringen: auf jedem falschen Wege wird es Euch in Ewigkeit nicht gelingen.”

The use of the words “Anmut und Würde” (grace and dignity) is persiflage directed against Schiller, for the opposition of ‘naive’ and ‘sentimental’ corresponds to the antithesis ‘Grace and Dignity,’ which Schiller developed in the essay bearing that title and then carried over into the realm of poetry.

Moreover, Schlegel adds a new element in his definition of modern art, an element for which we find no equivalent in Schiller’s theory. He writes:

“Lässt sich nun erweisen, dass auch durch die glücklichste natürliche Bildung, welche der Vervollkommnungsfähigkeit wie der Dauer nach nothwendig beschränkt sein muss, der ästhetische Imperativ nicht vollkommen befriedigt werden kann; und dass die künstliche ästhetische Bildung, welche nur auf die völlig aufgelöste natürliche Bildung folgen kann, und da angenommen muss, wo jene aufgehört hat, nähmlich mit dem Interessanten, manche Stufen durchgehen müsse, ehe sie nach den Gesetzen einer objektiven Theorie und dem Beispiel der klassischen Poesie zum Objektiven und Schönen gelangen könne; so ist eben damit auch bewiesen, dass das Interessante, als die notwendige Vorbereitung zur unendlichen Perfektibilität der ästhetischen Anlage ästhetisch erlaubt sei.”

Here Schlegel is ascribing provisional esthetic value to the interesting. And in a review he likewise applies the term ‘interesting’ to modern poetry, which becomes the foundation of Romantic poetry. The concept ‘interesting’ precludes Schiller’s universality: it must appeal to particular interests of the individual. Its goal is no longer to arouse through the harmony of beauty a Kantian “interesseloses Wohlgefallen.” In fact Schlegel assigns many presentations of the ugly a place among the finest poetic works, and he believes the portrayal of excessive confusion or despair springs from equally great, if not greater, artistic inspiration than that of complete harmony.

Schiller, on the other hand, regards beauty as the goal of the idyll, which is the highest form of sentimental poetry. The harmony, equipoise, balance, which he demands is diametrically opposed to the confusion and profusion allowed by Schlegel in modern poetry. It is obvious here that it is the strongly rationalistic element in Schiller which disturbs Schlegel.

30 Ibid., v. 2, pp. 427 f.
31 Ibid., v. 1, pp. 82 f.
32 loc. cit.
33 Schiller, op. cit., p. 228.
Not only does ‘interesting’ poetry admit of the presentation of the ugly and the confused, but: “Interessant nehmlich ist jedes originelle Individuum, welches ein grösseres Quantum von intellektuellem Gehalt oder aesthetischer Energie enthält.” 34 A “ grösseres Quantum” is merely a relative concept. It can be infinitely increased without losing its peculiar character. Therefore, the ideal of modern literature is unattainable, and the ‘progressive’ quality of this literature is further supported.

As the most apt example of interesting art Schlegel selects Shakespeare. He contrasts the sentimental, interesting dramas of Shakespeare with the objective Greek drama. The interesting play of Shakespeare, he says, is all-embracing.

This stress upon comprehensiveness plays an extremely important rôle in Schlegel’s interpretation of modern poetry. In his essay on the Study of Greek Poetry he describes modern education as thoroughly connected and coherent, constant in the mutual influence of its several components. These components have so many common properties and strive so obviously towards a common goal that they cannot but be regarded as a whole. Modern poetry, like education, is an all-inclusive whole. 35 In poetry all mental powers and all forms of expression are united. Romantic poetry should be poetry and philosophy, poetry and prose, popular art and literary art. 36

“Ihre Bestimmung ist nicht bloss, alle getrennten Gattungen der Poesie wieder zu vereinigen, und die Poesie mit der Philosophie und Rhetorik in Berührung zu setzen. Sie will, und soll auch Poesie und Prosa, Genialität und Kritik, Kunstpoesie und Naturpoesie bald mischen, bald verschmelzen, die Poesie lebendig und gesellig, und das Leben und die Gesellschaft poetisch machen, den Witz poetisieren, und die Formen der Kunst mit gediegenem Bildungsstoff jeder Art anfüllen und sättigen, und durch die Schwingungen des Humors beseelen. Sie umfasst alles, was nur poetisch ist, vom grössten wieder mehre Systeme in sich enthaltenden Systeme der Kunst, bis zu dem Seufzer, dem Kuss, den das dichtende Kind aushaucht in kunstlosen Gesang.” 37

Amalia asks in the Gespräch über Poesie: “Wenn das so fortgeht, wird sich uns, ehe wir uns versehen, eins nach dem andern in Poesie verwandeln. Ist denn alles Poesie?” 38 The answer of the Romanticist is that everything in life which comes in contact with the mind

34 Minor, op. cit., v. 1, p. 109.
35 Ibid., p. 93.
36 Ibid., v. 2, pp. 200, 225.
37 Ibid., p. 220.
38 Ibid., p. 354.
is poetry. Eichendorff gives poetic expression to this answer in *Wünschelrute*:

"Schläft ein Lied in allen Dingen,
Die da träumen fort und fort,
Und die Welt hebt an zu singen,
Triffst du nur das Zauberton."

By 1800 Fr. Schlegel was ready to give final expression to his interpretation of art. Heretofore he had published only fragments, but now he presented his theories in the form of a conversation, which appeared in the *Athenäum*. In his introduction he shows how poetry unites the world in peace. Every man has poetry within him; the world is animated by poetry. We need indulge in no critical investigations, discover no rules, in order to produce poetry, for poetry quells forth from the very heart of mankind.\(^{39}\)

Although no rules of art can be established, the study of its history is a prerequisite for an understanding of art, and "jeder ungebildete Mensch ist eine Karikatur von sich selbst."\(^{40}\)

Schlegel searches for the source and well-spring of ancient art in Greece. But Greek art, consummate in all its details, could not continue to flourish. A. W. Schlegel attributes its decline to the dissension introduced by Christianity into the happy, harmonious finite world.\(^{41}\)

Fr. Schlegel calls Dante the sacred creator and father of modern poetry. Dante, he says, unites art and religion and in one great poem brings all contradictions into harmony. Everything in this work is true in the visible realm and yet subtly related to the realm of the invisible.\(^{42}\) Cervantes and Shakespeare also stand out among the modern poets. In the poetry of Cervantes Schlegel sees ‘Witz,’ imaginative power, charm and profusion.\(^{43}\) Shakespeare’s poetry is likewise characterized by ‘Witz,’ charm and profusion.\(^{44}\)

As the next stage in the development of modern art Schlegel discusses Goethe’s all-embracing poetry: the mutual enlivenment of the two highest powers in man, philosophy and poetry.\(^{45}\)

\(^{41}\) A. W. Schlegel, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
\(^{42}\) Minor, *op. cit.*, v. 2, p. 348.
\(^{44}\) Schlegel’s view of Shakespeare is fundamentally different from Schiller’s: Schiller selects Shakespeare as an example of the naive poet (*op. cit.*, p. 184), while Schlegel calls his plays the Romantic foundation of the modern drama.
Schlegel regrets the lack of focus in modern poetry, in this respect sadly inferior to ancient literature. For the latter has as its nucleus mythology. But although Schlegel recognizes in ancient mythology the focal point of ancient culture, he is aware that modern man cannot look to the limited, sentient world of the ancients for his mythology. The unity between mythology and poetry must be achieved in a different way: the new mythology must spring from idealism.

Turning his attention to literary forms, Schlegel maintains that the source of modern poetry is the novel and that of ancient poetry the epic. The main distinction between the two forms is that the style of the epic precludes any reflection of the poet’s personality in the work, while the novelist plays capriciously with his material, presenting life as seen from his individual viewpoint.

The novel is according to Schlegel the highest form of art. Intended to be read, it forms a coherent whole, while drama, intended to be watched, is on the contrary not unified.

In this letter about the novel Schlegel seeks a definitive explanation of ‘sentimental.’ A spiritual feeling prevails, he says, in sentimental art. The spirit of love must hover everywhere, sometimes visible, sometimes invisible, in Romantic poetry. “Für den wahren Dichter ist alles dieses, so innig es auch seine Seele umschliessen mag, nur Hindeutung auf das Höhere, Unendliche, Hieroglyphe der Einen ewigen Liebe und der heiligen Lebensfülle der bildenden Natur.” This eternal love is a mystery. The imagination strives for an expression of it, but the absolute is inexpressible. The ‘Witz’ is the individual expression of the infinite through the phenomenon.

Friedrich Schlegel, as we have seen, uses Schiller’s antithesis as a spring-board, and precisely the fact that Schiller in Ueber naive

46 Ibid., p. 298.
47 Ibid., p. 358 ff. Schlegel is here in complete agreement with Schiller. Schiller advocates no ‘back to nature’ movement. According to his view, we may attain harmony of reason and inclination only through freedom: our will is moral only when it freely follows the law of reason. The harmony of the simple, natural state is far inferior to our harmony, because it results from no free choice. Since we have achieved freedom at the expense of unity, we must now attempt to restore that unity, but its achievement must be the work of our free choice. (op. cit., p. 163.)
48 This thought is reminiscent in many ways of the contrast presented in Ueber naive und sentimentalische Dichtung. Schiller says there that as coyly as Diana the naïve poet escapes the reader. Only modern poetry has taught us to seek to understand the poet’s soul through his work, to meditate with him about life. (op. cit., pp. 183 f.)
49 Minor, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 371 f.
und sentimentalische Dichtung, where he is applying the antithesis to literary forms, accedes the place of honor to sentimental poetry, may have encouraged Schlegel to enter upon a detailed and lively discussion of modern art. Silz says even "that Schiller's influence transformed the Classicist Friedrich Schlegel into a Romanticist, and that Schiller thereby became the spiritual father of Romanticism." 50 But Schlegel compounds step by step with Schiller, building up a conceptual system in which Schiller's dualism has no place. The stimulation offered him by "Uber naive und sentimentalische Dichtung" is fruitful even where he reacts negatively to Schiller, for it forces him to think through anew the fundamental concepts of his interpretation of art.

50 Silz, op. cit., p. 62.