Figures of Romantic Anti-Capitalism

by Robert Sayre and Michael Löwy

There has recently been a renewed interest in Europe and the USA for Romanticism and Romantic ideas. This tendency has been particularly evident in West Germany, a paradigmatic case of advanced capitalist society. Several recent essays and collections deal with the history of Romanticism and with typically Romantic subjects of interest like mythology, political theology, literary utopia, dionysian religion, etc.,[1] and these pbulications have aroused considerable discussion among German critics and historians.

But the phenomenon goes well beyond the limits of academia. A neo-romantic dimension is present in much of contemporary German artistic production, from literature to cinema. A novel by Michael Ende, *Die unendliche Geschichte* (K. Thienemanns Verlag; Stuttgart, 1979) — a kind of neo-Romantic fairy tale, a magical journey of initiation — has sold more than one million copies in the FRG and has recently been made into a film. The author, who is the son of a surrealist painter, does not hide his affinity with the Romantic tradition, and his contempt for capitalism and modern industrial society.

Moreover, there is also a very essential Romantic component in certain large-scale social movements like ecology, pacifism and the anti-nuclear coalitions, which have changed the political map of the country. The Romantic longing for a harmonious relationship between man and nature is one of the main driving forces of such movements, and one of the main tenets of their counter-culture.

Although these developments may be particularly intense in West Germany, they are not a specifically German trend. As can easily be seen, they are to be found in most contempory industrial/capitalist societies. One cannot therefore avoid facing the hypothesis that, *far from being a purely 19th-century phenomenon, Romanticism is an essential component of modern culture,* and its importance is in fact growing as we

1. See, for example: *Mythos und Moderne: Begriff und Bild einer Rekonstruktion,* Karl Heinz Bohrer, ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983); Manfred Frank, *Der kommende Gott: Vorlesungen über die neue Mythologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982); *Religionstheorie und politische Theologie,* Jacob Taubes, ed. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1983); *Romantische Utopie — utopische Romantik,* Gisela Dischner and Richard Faber, eds. (Gerstenberg Verlag, 1979), etc.

approach the end of the 20th century. We must therefore go beyond the traditional view of Romanticism as a purely literary trend located at the beginning of the 1800s.

But what exactly is Romanticism? An undecipherable enigma, a labyrinth with no exit, the Romantic phenomenon seems to defy scientific analysis, not only because its rich diversity apparently resists all efforts to reduce it to a common denominator, but also and above all because of its extraordinarily contradictory character, because it is a *coincidentia oppositorum:* at the same time (or alternately) revolutionary and counter-revolutionary, cosmopolitan and nationalist, realist and fanciful, restorationist and utopian, democratic and aristocratic, republican and monarchist, red and white, mystical and sensual... These are contradictions which inhabit not only the Romantic movement as a whole, but often also the life and work of a single author, and sometimes even a single text.

The apparently easiest way out of this difficulty is to solve the problem by eliminating the term itself, or by reducing it to a nominalist *flatus vocis.* The best known representative of this attitude (which goes back to the 19th century) is Arthur O. Lovejoy, who proposed that critics should abstain from using a term which lends itself to so much confusion: "The word romantic has come to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing. It has ceased to perform the function of a verbal sign... The one really radical remedy — namely, that we should all cease talking about Romanticism — is, I fear, certain not to be adopted."[2] However, such efforts to cure the Romantic fever by breaking its terminological thermometer remain relatively marginal. Most of the investigators start from the more reasonable hypothesis that there cannot be smoke without fire. But what kind of fire is it? What fuels it? And why does it extend in all directions?

Another expeditious method for getting rid of the contradictions of Romanticism is to explain them away by reference to the incoherence and frivolity of Romantic writers. The most eminent representative of this school of interpretation is Carl Schmitt, author of a well-known book on political Romanticism. According to Schmitt, "the tumultuous multiplicity of color (*tumultuarische Buntheit*) in Romanticism dissolves itself into the simple principle of subjectivist occasionalism, and the mysterious contradiction between the various political orientations of so-called political Romanticism can be explained by the moral inadequacy of a lyricism for which any content whatsoever can be the occasion for an aesthetic interest. For the essence of Romanticism, it is

2. A.O. Lovejoy, "On the Discriminations of Romanticism," in *Romanticism: Problems of European Civilization* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1965), p. 39.

unimportant whether the ideas which are being romanticized are monarchist or democratic, conservative or revolutionary; they are only occasional starting points for the productivity of the Romantic creative ego." Schmitt also insists on the "passivity," the "lack of virility" and the "feminine exaltation" *(feminine Schwärmerei)* of authors like Novalis, Schlegel or Adam Müller, but this would-be "moral inadequacy" can hardly replace a social and historical explanation of the phenomenon.[3] Other authors also stress the "femininity" of Romanticism. This is the case, for instance, with Benedetto Croce, who attempts to account for some of the contradictions by reference to the "feminine, impressionable, sentimental, incoherent and voluble" nature of the Romantic soul.[4] There is no need to dwell on the superficiality and sexism of such remarks, in the context of which "feminine" is synonymous with degradation or intellectual inferiority, and which claims that coherence is an exclusively male attribute.

As a matter of fact, for a large part (if not the majority) of the critics who deal with Romanticism, the problem of the antinomies of the movement does not arise at all, insofar as for them the phenomenon is stripped of its entire political and philosophical dimension and reduced to a simple literary school, the most visible traits of which are then described in a more or less superficial way. In its most shallow and mediocre form, this approach opposes Romanticism to "Classicism." For instance, according to the well-known French encyclopedia, *Larousse du XXe Siècle*, "one designates as *Romantics* the writers who, at the beginning of the 19th century, emancipated themselves from the classical rules of composition and style. In France, Romanticism was a profound reaction against the national classical literature, while in England and Germany it expresses the primitive foundations of the indigenous spirit." For some authors it is a basic psychological attitude which belongs to all ages, while for others it corresponds to the "inborn dispositions" of this or that nation.[5]

On the other hand, most of the works that examine the *political* aspect of Romanticism neglect its cultural and literary dimension and try to solve the contradictions by stressing exclusively the conservative, reac-

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3. Carl Schmitt, *Politische Romantik* (Munich and Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker und Humbolt, 2nd ed., 1925), pp. 162, 176, 227. We might add that Schmitt converted to Nazism in 1933 and in 1934 published an essay entitled "Der Führer schützt das Recht."

4. B. Croce, "History of Europe in the 19th Century" (1934), in *Romanticism*, p. 54.

5. See, for example, Fritz Strich, *Deutsche Klassik und Romantik* (Bern: Francke, 1962), (first edition 1922), for whom Romanticism is the expression of the "deepest inborn tendencies of the German soul."

tionary and counter-revolutionary aspect of the movement, by purely and simply ignoring the revolutionary Romantic currents and thinkers. In its most extreme forms, these interpretations perceive the Romantic political thinkers mainly as forerunners of Nazism. In a book significantly titled *From Luther to Hitler*, William McGovern explains in all seriousness that Carlyle's works "appear to be little more than a prelude to Nazism and Hitler." How does one include *Rousseau* in such narrow analytical framework? According to McGovern the fascist doctrine of absolutism "is little more than an expansion of the ideas first laid down by Rouseau."[6] In a more serious work, devoted to the analysis of pre-fascist thought (*stricto senso*) in Germany — Lagarde, Langbehn and Moeller van der Bruck — Fritz Stern nevertheless links these authors to what he calls a "formidable tradition": Rouseau and his followers, particularly in Germany, who criticized the Enlightenment as a naively rationalist and mechanistic form of thought. He also mentions here, pell-mell, Carlyle, Burkhardt, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky.[7] The most discerning historians — like John Bowle — limit themselves to taking notice of the fact that the "Romantic reaction" is born simultaneously under the sign of revolution — Rousseau — and of counter-revolution — Burke — but they are unable to identify what is common to these antinomic poles of the Romantic spectrum, except a vague "awareness of community" and a talent for "phrase-making."[8]

More interesting are the works — mainly German — which consider Romanticism as a *Weltanschauung* and try to grasp the spiritual essence which is common to literary, artistic, religious and political Romantics. Most of them define the Romantic worldview by its opposition to the *Aufklä*rung, i.e., by its refusal of the abstract rationalism of the Englightenment.[9] But these authors hardly can explain why Romanticism appeared at a certain historical moment, what its social significance is, and why it takes such contradictory forms.

A characteristic common to most of the non-Marxist essays on the subject (however respectable their historiographical, philological and

6. William McGovern, *From Luther to Hitler* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1941), pp. 200, 582.

7. Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (University of Calif. Press, 1961), p. xvii.

8. J. Bowle, *Western Political Thought* (London: University Paperbacks, 1961), pp. 422, 434.

9. See, for example, Anna Tumarkin, *Die romantische Weltanschauung* (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1920), although it is a rationalist study rather hostile to Romanticism; see also the essays of H.A. Korff, G. Hubner, W. Linden, M. Honecker and others, collected by Helmut Prang in *Begriffsbestimmung der Romantik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968).

analytical contribution may be) is the refusal to situate the phenomenon in relation to social and economic reality — which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to produce a real understanding or explanation of the Romantic enigma. Some authors purely and simply ignore the concrete social conditions, and consider only the abstract sequence of literary styles (Classic — Romantic) or philosophical ideas (rationalism — irrationalism); others link Romanticism in a superficial and external way to this or that historical, political or economic fact: the French Revolution, the Restoration, the Industrial Revolution. A typical example: A.J. George, author of a book with the promising title, *The Development of French Romanticism: The Impact of the Industrial Revolution in Literature*, presents Romanticism as a way of "adjusting to the effects of the Industrial Revolution." According to him, the Industrial Revolution simply "functioned as one of the prime sources of Romanticism" by furnishing it with "an imagery closer to reality and presentational forms tailored for modern conditions"; it helped also "focus attention on prose, thereby aiding the shift from the romance to the novel . . . To both prose and poetry it gave new and striking images. In short, it was a major factor in the development of French Romanticism."[10] Far from grasping the deeply antagonistic relationship of Romanticism to industrial society, this incredibly superficial analysis does not conceive their relationship otherwise than in terms of a "modernization" of literature and a renewal of its imagery.

Of course, the non-Marxist critical literature *has* made some remarkable contributions to knowledge of this field, in the form of literary history, detailed studies of specific writers, and in some cases the analysis of *Weltanschauung.* It has identified some important traits which are to be found in most, if not all Romantic authors. But one searches in vain for a global approach which might reveal the internal coherence of these elements, the underlying unity of these *membra disiecta* and its socio-cultural meaning.

The merit of the Marxist studies — whatever their limitations and simplifications (they are sometimes extremely arbitrary and one-sided) — is that most of them have been able to grasp the *essential* dimension of the phenomena, by designating the common thrust, the unifying element of the Romantic movement in its principal manifestations throughout the key European countries (Germany, England, France, Russia): *opposition to capitalism in the name of pre-capitalist values.*

The concept of "Romantic anti-capitalism" first appears with Lukács, but one can find its antecedents in Marx and Engels' writings

10. A.J. George, *The Development of French Romanticism: The Impact of the Industrial Revolution in Literature* (Syracuse University Press, 1955), pp. xi, 192.

on Balzac, Carlyle, Sismondi, etc. These writings reveal (in spite of the criticism) the very high esteem in which the authors of the *Communist Manifesto* held those authors who, although *laudatores tempis acti*, were able to strike at the heart of capitalism through their criticism.[11]

Unlike Marx and Engels, most of the Marxist authors of the 20th century (or those influenced by Marx) considered Romanticism — particularly the German strand — as an essentially reactionary and counter-revolutionary tendency. In France this orientation is exemplified by the historian Jacques Droz. His remarkable works on political Romanticism in Germany show very accurately the general character of the phenomenon (its unity as a *Weltanschauung*) and its anti-capitalist dimension. However, he sees the movement as being, in the last analysis, the reaction of the German intelligentsia towards the "principles of the French Revolution and of the Napoleonic conquest," a reaction that longs for the restoration of medieval civilization, and which is located without any doubt "in the camp of counter-revolution"; in short, a movement that expressed "the consciousness of the old ruling classes of the danger which threatened them." This position implies that Hölderlin, Büchner and the other Romantics who favored the French Revolution are excluded from the framework of analysis, and that the Jacobin and pro-revolutionary period of numerous writers and poets whose Romantic character is beyond any doubt, remains an inexplicable accident. Referring to Friedrich Schlegel, Jacques Droz acknowledges that his transformation from republican into conservative is "difficult to explain," and he ends by attributing it (following Carl Schmitt's thesis which he criticizes elsewhere in his book as wrong) to the "occasionalist dilettantism" of the poet.[12]

Lukács himself is also one of those Marxist authors who consider Romantic anti-capitalism mainly as a reactionary current, tending towards the Right and fascism. He has, however, the merit of having

11. On this subject see M. Löwy, *Marxisme et romantisme révolutionnaire* (Paris: Sycomore, 1979). By giving the title "Against Romanticism" to a section of his collection of texts by Marx and Engels on literature and art, Jean Fréville takes a completely onesided position that does not correspond to the texts and which illustrates the impoverishment of Marxism by the Stalinist perspective: *Sur la littérature et l'art* (Paris: Editions Sociales Internationales, 1936).

12. Jacques Droz, *Le Romantisme allemand et l'Etat, Resistance et collaboration en Allemagne napoléonienne* (Paris: Payot, 1966), pp. 50, 295; and *Le Romantisme politique en Allemagne* (Paris: A. Colin, 1963), pp. 25, 27, 36, etc. The opposite position, asserting the essentially *revolutionary* character of Romanticism, is presented (in a perspective close to Marxism) in the interesting and original study by Paul Rozenberg: *Le Romantisme anglais* (Paris: Larousse, 1973). However, this analysis also seems onesided, since it appears to exclude from Romanticism all forms of counter-revolutionary thought (e.g., Burke).

formulated the concept itself, to designate the whole range of forms of thought in which the criticism of bourgeois society is inspired by reference to the pre-capitalist past. He was also able to grasp the contradictory character of the phenomenon, even though he insisted that Romanticism leads more easily to reaction than to the Left and revolution.[13] Finally, one can find in at least *some* of his works, such as his writings on Balzac during the years 1939-41, a much deeper and more subtle analysis (precisely inspired by Marx and Engels' above-mentioned writings), where he stresses that the hatred of the author of the *Comédie Humaine* for capitalism, and his Romantic rebellion against the power of money, are the main sources of his realist clear-sightedness.[14]

Balzac is indeed at the center of the debate among Marxists on the problem of Romanticism. Engels hailed in Balzac — in his famous letter to Miss Harkness — the "triumph of realism" over his own political prejudices, i.e., his legitimist loyalties.[15] A vast critical literature has devotedly and dogmatically followed this scant indication, and the mysterious "triumph of realism" has become the principle commonplace of numerous Marxist studies on Balzac. Other authors have tried to place this analytical framework in question, in order to show that the writer's critical realism is not in contradiction with his worldview. Unfortunately their solution consists in arguing that Balzac's political ideology has a "progressive," "democratic," or even "leftist" character. For instance, the Czech historian Jan O. Fischer, author of an excellent book on Romantic realism which has many interesting insights into the double nature (sometimes turned towards the past, sometimes towards the future) of Romantic anti-capitalism, tries in vain to prove that Balzac's legitimism was "objectively democratic" and that the "true content" of his monarchism was democracy. The arguments he puts forward are not very convincing: Balzac aimed for the "well-being of the people" and of the nation; he "sympathized with the common people" and their social needs — these are all in fact philanthropic tendencies typical of monarchist paternalism, which have nothing whatsoever to do with democracy.[16] One finds a similar

13. See his article on Dostoevsky in 1931, where the term "Romantic anti-capitalism" appears for the first time: "Über den Dostojewski Nachlass," *Moskauer Rundschau,* March, 1931. In his history of German literature Lukács refuses to consider Hölderlin as a Romantic writer: cf. *Brève Histoire de la littérature allemande* (Paris: Nagel, 1949), p. 57.

14. G. Lukács, *Ecrits de Moscou* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1974), p. 159.

15. Marx-Engels, *Über Kunst und Literatur* (Berlin: Verlag Bruno Henschel, 1948), p. 104.

16. Jan O. Fischer, *"Epoque Romantique" et réalisme: Problèmes méthodologiques* (Prague: Univerzita Karlova, 1977), pp. 254-55, 258, 260, 266-67.

approach in some of the writings of Piere Barbéris, one of the best contemporary French Marxist critics. In one of his essays he suggests that one can find in Balzac — particularly in his youthful writings — "a leftist Romanticism" which is "Promethean" and inspired by the "cult of progress."[17] Lukács himself also claims that Balzac was a "great progressive artist," but he recognizes that the author of *Illusions perdues* was a realist, not in spite of but *because of* his Romantic and "pessimistic" anti-captialism.[18]

In our view this last remark opens the way for the most adequate interpretation of Balzac anc of many other Romantic anti-capitalist authors. Their critical lucidity is not at all contradicted by their "reactionary," past-oriented, legitimist or Tory ideology. It is vain (and useless) to dress them up with non-existant "democratic" and "progressive" virtues. It is *because* they turn their gaze towards the past that they are able to criticize the present with such acumen and realism. Of course, this criticism can be made (and better so!) from the standpoint of the *future*, as with the utopians and the revolutionaries. But it is a prejudice — inherited from the Enlightenment — that existing social reality can be criticized only from a "progressive" perspective.

Moreover, it seems to us that the category itself of "realism" is too narrow to embrace the richness of the Romantic anti-capitalist contribution. Too many Marxist works have as their only criterion the "realist" or "non-realist" character of a literary or artistic work, and some rather byzantine debates have opposed "socialist realism," "critical realism" and "realism without frontiers." Many Romantic and neo-Romantic productions are deliberately *non-realistic*: fantastic, fairy-like, magical, oniric, and more recently, surrealist. Yet this does not at all reduce their relevance and importance, both as critiques of capitalism and as dreams of *another world,* quintessentially opposed to bourgeois society. It would perhaps be useful to introduce a new concept — "critical unrealism" — to designate the creation of an imaginary, ideal, utopian or fantasy universe radically opposed to the grey, prosaic and inhuman reality of industrial capitalist society. Even when it apparently takes the form of a "flight from reality," this "critical unrealism" may contain a powerful negative load of (explicit or implicit) protest against the established order. It is because of their "critical unrealist" character that not only poets and writers like Novalis and E.T.A. Hoffmann, but also utopians and revolutionaries like Fourier and William Morris have brought to Romantic anti-capitalism an essential dimension, as

17. Pierre Barbéris, "Mal du siècle, ou d'un romantisme de droite à un romantisme de gauche," in *Romantisme et politique, 1815-1851* (Paris: A. Colin,1969), p. 177.

18. Lukács, *Ecrits de Moscou*, p. 150.

interesting from a Marxist standpoint as the ruthlessly realist clear-sightedness of a Balzac or a Dickens.

Some Marxist studies do exist, however, which embrace, in a dialectical way, both the contradictions and the essential unity of Romanticism, and which do not neglect its revolutionary potential. Ernst Fischer, for instance, defines Romanticism as "a movement of protest — of passionate and contradictory protest against the bourgeois capitalist world, the world of 'lost illusions', against the harsh prose of business and profit... Again and again, at each turning-point of events, the movement split up into progesssive and reactionary trends... What all the Romantics had in common was an antipathy to capitalism (some viewing it from an aristocratic angle, others from a plebeian)..."[19]

One can find similar analyses in certain writings of Lukács, of his Hungarian disciples (Ferenc Fehér, György Marcus) and of other critics influenced by the Lukácsian approach (Norman Rudich, Paul Breines, Andrew Arato, Adolfo Sanchez Vazquez), as well as in several of Herbert Marcuse's works and those of Americans influenced by him (Jack Zipes). Outside of this specifically German cultural tradition, it is among English Marxists that we find the most insightful studies of Romantic anti-capitalism: E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams (for the Anglo-Saxon cultural sphere) and Eric Hobsbawm (for the Romantic movement in the first half of the 19th century).

Raymond Williams' contribution is particularly significant. His remarkable book, *Culture and Society* (1958), is the first critical assessment, from a socialist standpoint, of the whole English Romantic anti-capitalist tradition, from Burke and Cobbett to Carlyle, from Blake and Shelley to Dickens, from Ruskin and William Morris to T.S. Eliot. While recognizing the shortcomings of the Romantic attitude towards modern society, he vindicates the positive aspects of its defense of art and culture as the embodiment of "certain human values, capacities, energies, which the development of society towards an industrial civilization was felt to be threatening or even destroying," of the struggle for "a mode of human experience and activity which the progress of society seemed increasingly to deny." The possibility of mobilizing this tradition for socialism is illustrated by William Morris, who was able to link the cultural values of Romanticism to the organized movement of the working class.[20]

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19. Ersnt Fischer, *The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach* (London: Penguin, 1963), pp. 52, 55.

20. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (London: Penguin, 1976), pp. 53, 56, 153. In a recent interview with *New Left Review,* Williams makes a critical

In Eastern Europe there is no lack of studies on Romanticism, but only a few of them escape the dogmatic official framework and develop a fruitful analysis, as in the case of Jan O. Fischer in Prague and Claus Träger in the GDR. Finally, in France Pierre Barbéris is the most important critic examining Romanticism from an "open" Marxist viewpoint.

Most of the above-mentioned studies, however, are limited in scope: they restrict themselves to a single author, or a single country, or one historical period (generally the beginning of the 19th century); they consider mainly the literary and artistic aspect of the phenomenon; and finally, they have little to say about its social basis. There seems to be a gap that needs to be filled; for nowhere has there been attempted, as far as we know, an overall analysis, from a Marxist perspective, of Romanticism as a *Weltanschauung,* in its full historical extension and in terms of its sociological foundations.

In what follows we will attempt first of all to define Romanticism as a *Westanschauung*, or worldview, i.e., as a collective mental structure characteristic of certain social groups. Such a mental structure can be concretized in many, diverse areas of culture: in literature and the other arts, in philosophy and theology, in political, economic and legal thought, in sociology and history, etc. Consequently, the definition that we will propose here is limited neither to literature and art alone nor to the historical period in which the artistic movements termed "Romantic" developed. We consider as Romatics — or at least as having a Romantic dimension — not only a Byron, a Vigny or a Novalis in literature, but also, for example, Sismondi in economic theory, Schleiermacher in theology, Edmund Burke, Proudhon and Marcuse in political philosophy, Simmel, Tönnies and Max Weber in sociology.[21]

The modern conception of worldview has been elaborated most thoroughly by the sociologist of culture, Lucien Goldmann, who has developed — and carried to a higher level — a long tradition in German thought (especially W. Dilthey). However, in spite of the fact that he took into consideration principally the worldviews of the modern period, and that he explored in detail a number of the most significant among them, Romanticism is not one of those treated by Goldman. If we enumerate in historical order the worldviews analyzed by him — the tragic worldview in its Jansenist and Kantian forms, the rationalist

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reassessment, from a Marxist standpoint, of the limitations and shortcomings of this book (first published in 1958): *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso, 1981), chap. II, 1.

21. For a descriptive presentation which gives a similar extension to the Romantic phenomenon, see Paul Honigsheim, "Romantik und neuromantische Bewegungen," in *Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften* (Stuttgart, 1953).

worldview in Cartesian and Enlightenment guise, the dialectical worldview in its varied manifestations, and finally existentialism and structuralism[22] — we cannot fail to notice a gap, mainly in the 19th century; for it can hardly be claimed that dialectical thought (and the positivism that continues the rationalist trend) represent the only predominant worldviews of the period. One of the missing elements, at least, is precisely Romantic anti-capitalism, of the worldview of which we will attempt a preliminary analysis.

Since what is involved is an *historical* worldview — one localized in time rather than a universal tendency of the human mind — we must first define the boundaries of the historical field in which it manifests itself. As regards the origin, or genesis of the phenomenon, we must reject as overly restrictive the hypothesis according to which Romanticism is "the fruit of disillusionment with the unfulfilled promises of the bourgeois revolution of 1789," or "a series of questions and answers directed at post-revolutionary society."[23] According to this conception, Romanticism as a mental structure does not exist before the French Revolution, having been generated by the disillusionment that follows the full coming to power of the bourgeoisie. In this perspective it is a transformation on the political level that becomes the catalyst for the Romantic groundswell. In our view, however, the phenomenon is to be understood as a response to that slower and more profound transformation that takes place on the socio-economic level: the rise of capitalism. This hypothesis would lead us to expect manifestations of Romanticism *before* 1789, since of course the development of capitalist economic structures well precedes restructuration on the political level.

In fact we do find a certain number of cultural phenomena well before the Revolution that correspond to our conception of Romanticism. Indeed, Pierre Barbéris has demonstrated a filiation leading to Romanticism from the social criticism of La Bruyère, Fénelon and Saint-Simon at the end of the 17th century. [24] Here, however, we can only speak of precursors, for the above writers are far from articulating a full set of Romantic attitudes. The real beginnings of Romanticism are rather to be found in the latter half of the 18th century, as a reaction

22. For a typology and discussion of the worldviews studied by Goldmann, see S. Naïr and M Löwy, *Lucien Goldmann ou la dialectique de la totalité* (Paris: Seghers, 1973); and R. Sayre, "Lucien Goldmann and the Sociology of Culture," in *Praxis*, 1, 2 (1976).

23. Claus Träger, "Des Lumières à 1830: Héritage et innovation dans le romantisme allemand," in *Romantisme* 28-29 (1980), 90; H.P. Lund, "Le Romantisme et son histoire," in *Romantisme* 7 (1974), 113.

24. See P. Barbéris, *Aux sources du réalisme: aristocrates et bourgeois* (Paris: 10/18, 1978), pp. 330-40.

against the Enlightenment on the one hand, but also often *bound up with it in a complex way.* Many of the most important manifestations of nascent Romanticism — especially Rousseau in France and the *Sturm und Drang* movement in Germany — by no means totally negate the Enlightenment perspective. On the contrary, rather than simply turning away from the far-reaching cultural critique undertaken in a rationalist vein by the philosophers of the *Aufklärung*, many 18th-century Romantics can be seen as *extending* this critique — widening and developing it further in a new register. Thus, for instance, to the Enlightenment's indictment of aristocratic privilege — judged in the light of Reason — is added a revulsion of the whole affective being against the bourgeois mentality and the capitalist social relations that are increasingly predominating. In this period we often find a subtle admixture of classic Enlightenment attitudes, along with something quite new and different that later comes to be called Romanticism; and in certain cases the two elements do not coexist in contradictory juxtaposition, but rather the second represents a kind of radicalization from within the Enlightenment nucleus. This characteristic of early Romanticism makes it abundantly clear that as a whole Romanticism cannot be defined as the antithesis of Enlightenment. As we will see, at least one strand of Romanticism is the direct heir of the latter, and several others (the revolutionary/utopian forms in general) have significant ties with it.[25]

Concerning the alleged "end " of Romanticism, none of the dates often put forward as marking its termination are viable in terms of our conception; neither 1848 nor the turn of the century witness its disappearance or even marginalization. What is true of the Romantic anti-capitalist worldview in general, holds also for its artistic expressions more specifically. Although 20th-century artistic movements are generally not termed Romantic, nonetheless trends as important as Expressionism and Surrealism are profoundly impregnated with the Romantic spirit. If our hypothesis — that the Romantic worldview represents in essence a reaction against the conditions of life in capitalist society — is justified, it would follow that the Romantic stance should continue to retain its vitality as long as capitalism itself persists. And indeed, although the latter has undergone considerable modifications since its beginnings, it has kept its essential characteristics, the same

25. Werner Krauss has developed the idea — which goes a step further than we do in our view represents an exaggeration — that Romanticism *as a whole* can best be seen as an extension of the *Aufklärung:* see his "Französische Aufklärung und deutsche Romantik," in *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx Universität Leipzig*, No. 12 (1963); for a discussion of his thesis, see *Literaturwissenschaft und Sozialwissenschaften 8: Zur Modernität der Romantik,* Dieter Bäusch, ed. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1977), pp. 12ff.

characteristics that stimulated the earliest Romantic revolt. According to Max Milner the first Romantic wave continues to have something to say to us because "the crisis of civilization associated with the genesis and development of industrial capitalism is far from having been resolved."[26] And, as already mentioned, a number of the most crucial socio-cultural phenomena of recent times are impossible to understand adequately without reference to the Romantic anti-capitalist worldview.[27]

In what follows we will attempt to sketch an analytic definition of that worldview, presenting it as a series of themes, logically related and formulated at a level of generality sufficient to allow us to include all of the diverse manifestations of the phenomenon throughout the historical span that we have just indicated. The first element is the source of all the others, and they are wholly dependent on it. At the root of the Romantic worldview is a hostility towards present reality, a rejection of the present that is often quasi-total and heavily charged with emotion. This severely critical attitude towards the here and now determines the other elements of the Romantic thematics. In the past Romanticism has often been defined by way of an enumeration of themes presented in an abstract and atemporal manner, without any awareness that its seemingly most spiritual or intellectual aspects are closely bound up with temporality. Romanticism issues from a revolt against a concrete, historical present. In the dictionary of the brothers Grimm, *romantisch* is defined (in part) as "belonging to the world of poetry . . . in opposition to prosaic reality"; and Chateaubriand and Musset contrast the overflowing plenitude of the heart with the dismaying "emptiness" of the real world around it.[28] According to Lukács' formulation in the *Theory of the Novel*, the "Romanticism of disillusionment" is characterized by a lack of correspondance between reality and the soul, in which "the soul is broader and more vast than any destiny that life can offer it."[29] Balzac grouped together a number of works published in 1830 (among them Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le noir*), and called them the "school of disenchantment"; this term could in fact be applied to the whole of the Romantic worldview. Referred to in France as "*le siècle*" (cf. the expression "*mal du siècle*"), in England and Germany as "civilization" (in opposition to "culture"), modern reality produces dis-

26. M. Milner, *Le Romantisme I (1820-1843)* (Paris: Arthaud, 1973), p. 242.

27. Cf. H. Kals, *Die soziale Frage in der Romantik* (Cologne and Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1974), pp. 7-15.

28. *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm* (Leipzig, 1893), Vol. 8, p. 1156; Chateaubriand, *Génie du Christianisme,* II, iii, 9; Musset, *La Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, Ch. 2.

29. Lukács, *La Théorie du roman* (Paris: Gonthier, 1963), p. 109.

enchantment. For Max Weber capitalism represents the "disenchantment of the world" (*Entzauberung der Welt*), and conversely Tieck has defined Romanticism as "the enchanted night in the glow of the moon" *(die mondbeglänzte Zaubernacht).* An important aspect of Romanticism, then, is the *re-enchantment* of the world through imagination.

Moreover the Romantic sensibility perceives in present reality — more or less consciously and explicitly — essential characteristics of modern capitalism. What is rejected, in other words, is not the present in the abstract but a specifically capitalist present conceived of in terms of its most important defining qualities. Although there is sometimes an awareness of the exploitation of one class by another (as, for example, in the portrayal of the industrialist John Bell in Vigny's *Chatterton),* this awareness is by no means always present in Romanticism. *All* of the diverse currents of Romantic anti-capitalism, on the other hand, in one way or another point to and protest against *those characteristics of capitalism of which the negative effects are felt throughout the social classes,* and which are experienced as misery everywhere in captialist society. What is involved is the all-powerfulness in this society of exchange value — of money and market relations — i.e., the phenomenon of reification. And, as a corollary of generalized reification, social fragmentation and the radical isolation of the individual in society. For a society based on money and competition separates individuals into egotistical monads that are essentially hostile or indifferent to each other.[30] Romantic anti-capitalism revolts most particularly against these traits — the deepest principles of oppression at work *throughout* the social fabric.

The experience of a loss is linked to this revolt; in the modern world something precious has been *lost*, on the level both of the individual and of humanity as a whole. The Romantic vision is characterized by the painful conviction that present reality lacks certain essential human values, values which have been "alienated." This sharp sense of alienation in the present is often experienced as an *exile.* In defining the Romantic sensibility A.W. Schlegel speaks of the soul "under the weeping willows of exile" (*unter den Trauerweiden der Verbannung*).[31] The soul, which is the seat of the human qualities in man, lives in the here and now far from its true home and true fatherland (*Heimat*); indeed, for Arnold Hauser "the feeling of homelessness *(Heimatlosigkeit)* and isolation became the fundamental experience" of the early 19th-century Romantics.[32] And Walter Benjamin — whose own sensibility is

30. See R. Sayre, *Solitude in Society: A Sociological Study in French Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

31. *European Romanticism: Self-Definition*, ed. L. Furst (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 36.

32. A. Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur* (Munich: Beck, 1953), II, p. 182.

thoroughly impregnated with the Romantic worldview — sees in the German Romantics' fascination with dream an indication of the obstacles laid out in real life on the "road that returns to the soul's maternal home" (*der Heimweg der Seele ins Mutterland*).[33]

The Romantic soul longs ardently to return home, and it is precisely the *nostalgia* for what has been lost that is at the center of the Romantic anti-capitalist vision. What the present has lost existed once before, in a more or less distant past. The determining characteristic of this past is its *difference from the present*; it is the period when the alienations of the present did not yet exist. Since these alienations stem from capitalism such as the Romantics perceive it, the nostalgia is for a pre-capitalist past, or at least for one in which the capitalist system was less developed than at present. Therefore this nostalgia for the past is — as Marx points out in relation to the English Romantics — "closely linked" to the criticism of capitalism.[34] The past that is the object of nostalgia can be entirely legendary or mythological, as in the case of Eden, the Golden Age, or the lost Atlantis. But even in the many cases in which it is quite real, the past is always idealized. The Romantic vision takes a moment of the real past in which negative traits of capitalism were lacking or were attenuated, and in which human values crushed under capitalism existed still, and *transforms it into a utopia*, making it an incarnation of Romantic aspirations. It is this which explains the apparent paradox that the Romantic orientation towards the past can be — and is in general in a certain sense — a look into the future; for the image of a dreamed-of future beyond capitalism is inscribed in the nostalgic vision of a pre-capitalist era.

In the term "Romantic," such as it was undertood in the beginnings of the movement designated by that name, there is a reference to one particular past: the Middle Ages. For Friedrich Schlegel what is involved is the "period of the knight, of love and of the fairy-tale, from which the phenomenon and the word itself derive."[35] One of the principal origins of the word is the medieval courtly *romance*. But Romantic anti-capitalism as we conceive it looks backwards towards many other pasts than the Middle Ages. Primitive societies, ancient Greece, the English Renaissance, and the French *ancien régime*, have all served as vehicles for this worldview. The choice — but even more the *interpretation* — of the past is made according to the different Romantic tendencies (of which we will attempt to outline a typology in the following section).

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33. W. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, III (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), p. 560.
34. Marx-Engels, *Sur la littérature et l'art*, p. 287.
35. *European Romanticism*, p. 9.

The nostalgia for paradise lost is most often accompanied by a *quest for what has been lost.* It has often been noticed that at the heart of Romanticism lies an *active* principle taking many forms: restlessness, questioning, perpetual becoming, searching, struggle. In general, then, the second moment of the phenomenon involves an active response, an attempt to rediscover or recreate the lost paradise (there also exists, however, a"resigned" Romanticism which we will discuss in the next section). For the young Lukács the Romantics' Golden Age is not only of the past: "It is the goal, and the duty of each person is to reach it. It is the 'blue flower'! . . ."[36]

The quest may be undertaken, however, in several different ways: in imagination or in reality, and aiming for accomplishment in the present or in the future. An important orientation of Romanticism attempts to recreate paradise in the present on the level of imagination, by poeticizing or aesthetizing the present. For Novalis, for example, "the world must be romanticized" through a "heightening" *(Potenzierung)* of banal, habitual reality.[37] More generally, Romantic artistic creation can be seen in this light, as a utopian projection realized in the present through imagination. A second tendency consists in rediscovering paradise in the present, but in this case on the level of the real. What is involved here is flight to "exotic" countries, that is, countries outside the pale of capitalist reality, flight to an "elsewhere" that preserves a more primitive past in the present. The strategy of exoticism is thus to seek the past in the present through a simple movement in space.

But there exists a third tendency that considers the other two to be illusory or at least only partial solutions, and which orients itself towards the rebuilding of paradise in a *real future*. In this perspective — which was shared by Benjamin and Marcuse, for example — memory of the past serves as a weapon in the struggle for the future. A well-known poem by Blake expresses the notion with great power. The poet first wonders whether the divine presence once manifested itself in England "in ancient time," before her hills were covered with "these dark Satanic mills"; then he asks that weapons by brought to him, and declares: "I will not cease from Mental Fight / Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand / Till we have built Jerusalem / In England's green and pleasant Land."[38] In this form of Romanticism the quest is aimed at the

36. Lukács, "La Philosophie romantique de la vie," in *L'Ame et les formes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p. 84.

37. *European Romanticism*, p. 3; cf. Wordsworth's conception of poetry: pp. 11-12.

38. W. Blake, *Poems and Prophecies* (London: Dent, 1975), pp. 109-110.

creation of a new Jerusalem in the future.

Experience of a loss in the capitalist present, nostalgia for what has been lost, localized in a pre-capitalist past, and quest for what has been lost in present or future: such are the principal components of the worldview we are exploring here. But *what* exactly has been lost? The question of the content of the alienation, of the nostalgia and of the quest, remains to be raised. What, in other words, are the *positive values* of Romantic anti-capitalism? They are an aggregate of *qualitative* values — ethical, social, and cultural — in opposition to the mercantile rationality of exchange value. In our view they are concentrated around two opposing but not contradictory poles. The first of these primary values, although often experienced in terms of loss, in fact represents a new acquisition historically, or at the very least a development that can only come to full fruition in the modern context. We are referring to the *individual subjectivity*, to the development of the self in all the depth, breadth and complexity of its affectivity, and also in the free play of its imaginative capacities.

The development of this individual subject is in fact directly linked to the history and "pre-history" of capitalism: the "isolated" individual develops with and because of it. This phenomenon is the source, however, of a significant contradiction in capitalist society; for this very individual created by the latter cannot but live frustrated within its constraints, and is eventually led to revolt against it. Capitalism calls forth the independent individual to fulfill certain socio-economic functions; but when this individual transforms itself into a full-fledged subjectivity, and begins to explore the internal universe of its particular constellation of feeling, it enters into contradiction with a system based on quantitative calculation and standardization. And when it begins to want to freely exercise its powers of fantasy it comes up against the extreme mechanization and platitude of the world created by capitalist relations. Romanticism represents the revolt of the repressed, manipulated and deformed subjectivity, and of the "magic" of imagination banished from the capitalist world.

The other, dialectically opposed value of the worldview, is *unity*, or *totality*: unity of the self with two encompassing totalities — the universe of nature, on the one hand, and on the other the human community. While the first Romantic value constitutes its *individual* — even individualistic — moment, the second is *trans-individual* or collective. And while the first is in fact modern despite its being experienced as a nostalgia, the second represents a true return (in the case of Romantics oriented towards the future, what is involved is not a simple return to the past but a recreation of past unity on a higher level).

The two forms of nostalgic yearning for unity are defined specifically

in opposition to the capitalist status quo. Hauser rightly comments that the Romantics' enthusiasm for nature is "unthinkable without the isolation of the town from the countryside."[39] The capitalist principle of domination and exploitation of nature is absolutely antithetical to the Romantic quest for the integration and harmony of mankind in the universe. And the impulse to recreate the human community (conceived of in various ways: as authentic communication with other selves, as participation in the organic whole of a people, *Volk,* and in its collective imagination as expressed through mythology, folklore, etc., as social harmony or a future classless society, etc.) is the counterpoint to the refusal of social fragmentation and the isolation of the individual under capitalism. Thus Brentano describes his reactions on visiting Paris in 1827: "All the people I saw were walking in the same street, beside each other, and yet each one seemed to be following his own solitary course; no one greeted anyone else, and each pursued his personal interest. All these comings and goings seemed to me the very emblem of egoism. Each person is thinking only of his own interest, like the number of the house towards which he is hurrying."[40] Protest against capitalism and the positive Romantic values are thus two sides of the same coin: what is rejected in capitalism is the exact antithesis of the values that are sought because they have been lost.

The worldview that we have very briefly outlined above is, in our estimation, a kind of lost continent on the map of the human sciences, since it entirely escapes notice in the context of their habitual categories and frames of reference. Literary and artistic studies generally give a far more limited extension to Romanticism, and do not relate it to capitalism. And as far as the other disciplines are concerned — like history, sociology, political science, economics, etc. — Romanticism is usually not recognized as a perspective that can structure mentalities in their areas of competence. Since it doesn't fit into the usual categories (in philosophy: rationalism, empiricism, idealism, etc.; in history and politics: Left/Right, conservative/liberal, progressive/reactionary, etc.), it slips through their conceptual grid and most often remains invisible in their analyses. Yet, as we hope to demonstrate in

39. A. Hauser, *The Social History of Art* (New York: Vintage, 1951), III, 208.

40. Cited by Träger in *op. cit.*, p. 99. This passage strikingly resembles another — on London — by Engels in *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (New York: J.W. Lovell Co., 1887): "The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other, are they not all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy? . . . And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another . . . The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together within a limited space." (p. 17).

the typology of varieties of Romanticism that follows, this little-studied and ill-understood worldview has in fact played an absolutely crucial role in many different respects, on a worldwide scale and over the course of two centuries.

* * *

It would seem that a typology of the figures of Romantic anti-capitalism might serve as a useful tool, both to account for the rich diversity of specific trajectories within a common matrix and to explicate more precisely the universe of concrete works. There are obviously several criteria which could be used in making a classification: style (realist or non-realist), national culture (German, French, etc.), intellectual field (politics, literature, etc.), historical period ("pre-Romanticism," late Romanticism, neo-Romanticism, etc.). However, having defined Romanticism as a reaction towards capitalism and bourgeois society, it seems to us more logical to define the types *in terms of their relation to capitalism*, according to the particular manner in which they envisage the relationship. This does not mean a political typology in the limited sense, but rather a framework that brings together the economic, the social and the political. The different categories are, of course, *ideal types* in the Weberian sense, and they are generally to be found combined, juxtaposed or blended in the work of a particular author. We will say that a given author belongs to a given type when the latter constitutes the *dominant* element in his writings.

What follows is a list of what we consider to be some of the principle types of Romantic anti-capitalism:

1) "*Restitutionist*" Romanticism, which explicitly aims to re-establish pre-capitalist socio-cultural formations that have disappeared (most often medieval). This concept is not identical with "reactionary," a term that refers directly to counter-revolutionary reaction, which is not necessarily Romantic (the term "restitutionist," which we have borrowed from the sociologist of religion Jean Seguy, seems preferable to the pejorative terms "retrograde" and "*passéiste*" that one of us, Michael Löwy has used in several earlier works).

2) *Conservative* Romanticism, which does not wish to re-establish a more or less distant past but to *maintain* society and the State as they exist in countries untouched by the French Revolution (England and Germany at the end of the 18th, beginning of the 19th century), and to restore the French *status quo ante* of 1788. In both cases what is involved is *a particular juxtaposition of capitalist and pre-capitalist formations.*

There also exists, however, a *non-Romantic* conservatism that justifies the capitalist order and defends it against all criticism, whether it be in the name of the past or the future. One may speak of conservative

Romanticism only when some measure of criticism of capitalism, from the point of view of organic values of the past, is present in the discourse. This obviously holds true also for the other types we will discuss further on: liberal and socialist Romanticism, etc.

3) *Fascist* Romanticism, a very specific modern form in which neo-Romanticism transforms itself into Nazi or fascist ideology with the rise of those movements between the two wars. There are doubtless elements of the fascist ideologies that are foreign or even hostile to Romanticism — one need only think of Italian Futurism, for example — but nonetheless one of their predominant themes is hatred of the modern world and nostalgia for an organic community of the past.

4) *"Resigned"* Romanticism, which realizes that the re-establishment of pre-capitalist structure is impossible and which considers, although deeply regretting it, that the advent of industrial capitalism is an irreversible fact to which one can only resign oneself. In some cases this type of Romanticism can give rise to a tragic worldview (the insurmountable contradiction between values and reality); in other cases it produces a reformist point of view that aims to remedy some of the most glaring evils of bourgeois society, with pre-capitalist institutions playing a regulative role.

5) *Liberal* Romanticism, which seems to be a contradiction in terms, since classical liberalism and anti-capitalist Romantic revolt would appear to be mutually exclusive. But one is obliged to recognize the existence of such a phenomenon — especially in the early 19th century — in which Romanticism and its opposite are an unstable compound, the former on the point of negating itself. The type is essentially based on a misunderstanding, since for liberal Romanticism the paradise lost is not entirely incompatible with the capitalist present; all that would be necessary would be to cure the most flagrant ills of that order by social and moral reform.

6) *Revolutionary and/or Utopian* Romanticism, in which the nostalgia for a pre-capitalist past is projected into the hope for a post-capitalist future. Rejecting both the illusion of a pure and simple return to organic communities of the past and resigned acceptance of the bourgeois present, it aspires — more or less radically and explicitly, depending on the case — to see the abolition of capitalism and the creation of a utopian future possessing some traits or values of pre-capitalist societies.

Within revolutionary Romanticism there are a number of currents that constitute quite distinct types, which should consequently be examined in their specificity:

I — *Jacobin-democratic* Romanticism, which adopts a critical stance towards both feudalism and the new aristocracy of wealth, in the name

of the egalitarian values of the radical wing of the French Revolution. Most often its pre-capitalist reference points are the Greek Polis and the Roman Republic.

II — *Populist* Romanticism, which opposes industrial capitalism as monarchy and serfdom, and which aims to salvage, re-establish or develop in some way as a social alternative the forms of production and of peasant and artisan community life of the pre-capitalist "people."

III — *Utopian-humanist* Socialism: we designate by this term those socialist currents and thinkers who aspire to a collectivist (post-capitalist) utopia, but who do not see the industrial proletariat as the historical agent of this project. Their discourse is addressed to humanity as a whole (or to suffering humanity in particular). They might also be designated by the term "utopian socialists," but this would be ambiguous since most forms of revolutionary Romanticism are utopian in the etymological sense of the word: the aspiration for a not-yet-existing society (utopia: in no place).

IV — *Libertarian*, or Anarchistic Romanticism, which draws on the pre-capitalist, collectivist traditions of peasants, artisans and skilled workers in its revolutionary struggle against capitalism and the modern State in all its forms. What distinguishes this current from other similar ones is its irreconcilable opposition to the centralized State, perceived as the quintessence of all the oppressive characteristics of capitalist modernity, and its intention to create a decentralized federation of local communities.

V — *Marxist* Romanticism: one can find a Romantic anti-capitalist dimension in the works of Marx, but it is far from being the dominant one. However, it becomes dominant in the thought of certain authors, the nostalgia for a pre-capitalist *Gemeinschaft* (or for its values, its culture, etc.) plays a central role, both as a motivating force for the critique of industrial capitalism and as a crucial element in the socialist utopia of the future.

This typology is to be used with caution, not only because the work of an author generally does not correspond exactly to any of the ideal types, but also because of the shifts, transformations, disavowals and reversals of position that are so common to Romanticism, the movements of a single author from one position to another within the spectrum of Romantic anti-capitalism. We have only to recall, just to cite a few examples, the itinerary of Friedrich Schlegel and of Görres from Jacobin republicanism to the most conservative monarchism, that of Georges Sorel from revolutionary syndicalism to the Action Française (and vice versa), that of Lukács from tragic, resigned Romanticism to revolutionary Bolshevism, that of William Morris from Romantic nostalgia for the Middle Ages to Marxist socialism, that of Robert Michels

and Arturo Labriola from revolutionary syndicalism to fascism, etc.

In some scases this kind of change eventually leads to a break with Romanticism and reconciliation with the bourgeois order. But those cases are exceptional. For the most part what occurs are changes of position *within the same intellectual field*, developments within the same socio-cultural matrix, Romantic anti-capitalism. It is precisely the *homogeneity of the ideological space* that allows us to comprehend these metamorphoses that are seemingly so bizarre. The fundamentally ambiguous, contradictory, and as it were "hermaphroditic" character of this Weltanschauung allows for the most multifarious of solutions, and the passage from one to another without the author having broken with the basic framework of his earlier problematics. This unity-in-diversity manifests itself also in the existence of certain cultural movements like Symbolism, Surrealism and Expressionism, which traverse the different types and cannot be pinned down to any one of the categories mentioned. The same holds for certain social movements calling for a return so nature, like the *Jugendbewegung* at the beginning of this century, or more recently the ecological movement.

In the following pages we will attempt to examine in more detail each of the types of Romantic anti-capitalism. principally through exemplary authors whose work — in the internal coherence of its basic structure — most nearly approaches the ideal-typical characteristics of each figure.

1) *"Restitutionist" Romanticism*

Within the constellation of Romantic anti-capitalisms the "restitutionist" vision occupies a privileged place, and consequently constitutes a logical point of departure in discussing the types. For this articulation of the worldview is both qualitatively and quantitatively the most significant. On the one hand, it is clear that by far the largest number of important Romantic writers and thinkers are to be situated principally in this category. On the other hand, we might say that the "restitutionist" perspective is of all the types the closest to the *essence* of the overall phenomenon. For at the heart of the general worldview we have found a nostalgia for the pre-capitalist past; and the restitutionist type is defined precisely by the desire to restore or recreate such a past state in the present. Restitutionism is neither resigned to the degraded present out of disenchanted realism, nor oriented towards the future, towards transcendance of both past and present, but rather calls for an actual return to the past that is the object of nostalgia. This past is sometimes a traditional agrarian society (as with the Russian Slavophiles, for example, or the Southern "Agrarian School" in the U.S between the two wars), but most often restitutionism looks to the Middle Ages. This

concentration of the restitutionist ideal in the medieval past, especially in its feudal form, might perhaps be explained on the one hand by the relative proximity in time of the Middle Ages (compared with antiquity, prehistoric times etc.), and on the other by its radical difference from what is rejected in the present: it is close enough for its restoration to be conceivable, yet totally opposed in its spirit and in its structures to the capitalist system.

Another characteristic of the restitutionist trend is that its most notable exponents are in the majority *literary*. Although one also finds it in philosophy (Schelling) and in political theory (Adam Müller), for example, it is especially artists who have discovered an affinity for it. It seems plausible that the predominance of artists can be explained principally by the growing awareness of the unrealistic — or even *entirely unrealizable* — character of the project to recreate a period of the past that is gone forever. And yet the dream of a return to the Middle Ages (or an agrarian society) continues to have great suggestive power for the imagination, and lends itself to visionary projections. Consequently it stands to reason that it should particularly attract sensibilities oriented towards the symbolic and esthetic dimension.

If one passes in review the major writers who share this vision, it also becomes clear that one of its principal focuses is Germany. Restitutionism appeared very early there — in the last years of the 18th century — and an intellectual milieu of artists and thinkers grew up in which it was developed. Yet at the outset the German *Frühromantik* enthusiastically took sides with the French Revolution and the values and hopes it incarnated, a fact that demonstrates very clearly that restitutionism by no means always has its roots in a reactionary or Right-wing ideology. However, disillusioned by the direction taken by the Revolution in its later years, and even more so by the Napoleonic period following it, the German Romantics turned towards the ideal of a medieval restoration, its primary values being the hierarchical order of the *Stände*, person-to-person feudal bonds, and the communion of the whole social body in religious faith and love for the monarch. Elaborated in the realm of politico-economic thought against the liberalism of Adam Smith by Baader, Görres and Adam Müller, and in the realm of theological and philosophical speculation by Ritter, Schleiermacher and the Schlegel brothers, this vision of an idealized Middle Ages first found literary expression in Tieck, Wackenroder and Novalis. The latter provided the classic formulation in his essay — "Europe, or Christendom" (1800) — in which he contrasts not only the sterile rationalism of the *Aufklärung* with the lost religious sense of marvel, but also the "commercial life" (*Geschäftsleben*) characterized by "egotistical preoccupations" (*eigennützige Sorgen*) and "man avid for possessions" (*habsüchtiger Mensch*), with medieval culture united in the spiritual com-

munity of the Church.[41] Later we find the restitutionist vision in E.T.A. Hoffmann, Eichendorff and Kleist, and in the operas of Wagner; it reappears again in the neo-Romantic currents at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, for example in Paul Ernst, a friend of Lukács' in his youth,[42] in the Viennese theoretician Othmar Spann, and in Stefan George and his circle.

In England the same reversal occurred in the first Romantic generation: after an initial *parti pris* for the French Revolution and its values, Wordsworth and Coleridge became disillusioned and turned — especially Coleridge — to medieval restitutionism. The latter perspective was soon articulated again in the novels of Walter Scott and the essays of Carlyle; it resurfaced later in the century in Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites. As for France, the ideological reversal within Romanticism was exactly the opposite: the original perspective — more or less impregnated with restitutionism — of Chateaubriand, Vigny, Lamartine, Lamennais and Hugo, gave way under the pressure of events to more liberal and democratic positions, and ones more oriented to the future.

At the end of the 19th century and throughout the 20th, although restitutionism tends to a certain extent to be replaced by resigned, revolutionary, or fascist Romanticism, it remains nonetheless a current of the first order of importance. To give an idea of its persistence at least up to World War II, we might mention its influence on Barrès and the French Right, on Oswald Spengler and the right-wing *Kulturpessimisten* in Germany, and on Yeats, T.S. Eliot and G.K. Chesterton in England. It has in fact survived up to the present, the most illustrious recent case of it being that of Solzhenitsyn.

To demonstrate its continued vitality in the 20th century we will take as an example of the restitutionist perspective a French novelist from the period between the two wars: Georges Bernanos. His case is particularly interesting because he appears to give literary voice to the worldview of a significant sector of French youth in the beginning of the 20th century. For in his youth before World War I, Bernanos was active in a far Right-wing student organization the very name of which reveals its restitutionist character: the "Camelots du Roi." Between the two wars, along with other members of the Camelots, Bernanos joined the Action Française; but, whereas a large portion of the latter organization, and of the French Right in general, moved progressively closer to fascism, Bernanos remained faithful to his original ideal: the

41. Novalis, *Werke* (Hädecke Verlag, 1924), pp. 313-14.

42. See M. Löwy, *Pour une sociologie des intellectuels révolutionnaires* (Paris: P.U.F., 1976), pp. 52-54.

medieval Christian monarchy. Consequently, in spite of the anti-Semitism that disfigures some of his earlier works, his vision differs totally from that of the Romantic anti-capitalists who were attracted by fascist ideology, and he remains a particularly pure case of restitution.

The title of one of Bernanos' works — *Les Grands Cimetières sous la lune* (The Great Cemeteries in Moonlight) — conveys metaphorically his conception of modern society: everything is stricken with spiritual death in a world illuminated only by the value of money (the moon). In this same work he cries out against "the extreme solitude to which [modern man] is abandoned by a society that hardly knows any longer other relations between human beings than those based on money."[43] His best-known novel, *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (Diary of a Country Priest), develops the same conception through portrayal of the social microcosm represented by the priest's parish. As one of the characters says: "The gods who protect the modern polis, we know who they are! They dine in town, and are called bankers." The representatives of true spiritual values in the novel oppose to this thoroughly debased world the ideal of medieval Christendom; if it had survived into the present, "we would have torn the feeling of solitude from the heart of Adam."[44]

The spiritual adventure embarked upon by the priest — a kind of modern saint — is to attempt to awaken his parish to the true values and thereby to create a favorable terrain for the restoration of the lost Christendom. His vocation is surprisingly similar, *mutatis mutandis*, to that of the German restitutionists, as defined by Friedrich Schlegel in 1805: "It is the express purpose of the new philosophy to restore the ancient German constitution, that is to say, the system based on honor, freedom and loyalty, by working to bring into being the state of mind on which the true, free monarchy depends, the state of mind that . . . [is] the only one having a saintly character."[45] One could not better summarize the restitutionist project, in its continuity from early German Romanticism to the period between the two wars in France. But in Bernanos' novel the project is condemned to failure. The modern malady is too deep, and the priest's struggle to save the soul of his parish is totally hopeless. The relative optimism of the German Romantics is replaced by a radical pessimism in Bernanos. And yet in spite of that Bernanos never becomes "resigned." In his novelistic universe the

43. G. Bernanos, *Les grands Cimetiéres sous la lune* (Paris: Plon, 1938), p. 27.

44. Bernanos, *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (Paris: Plon, 1936), pp. 21, 212. On the subject, see the chapter on Bernanos in R. Sayre, *Solitude in Society.*

45. In *Philosophical Lectures*, cited by J. Droz, *Le Romantisme politique en Allemagne,* p. 19.

only valid attitude remains to accept the necessity of an *absurd* struggle — one that is *lost from the outset* — to restore the lost paradise. Such is the despair that tends to take hold of restitutionism in late capitalism.

2) *Conservative Romanticism*

Conservative Romanticism in the strict sense manifests itself mainly in the work of *political* thinkers, who legitimate the established order by interpreting it as a "natural" result of historical evolution (for example, the "Historical School of Law" of Hugo and Savigny, the positive philosophy of the State of Friedrich Julius Stahl, and the Tory ideology of Disraeli). Among the important Romantic philosophers Schelling is probably closest to the conservative position, and in political economy Malthus is not without some affinities with it.

Its borderline with restitutionist Romanticism is fluid and imprecise: authors like the French ultras Joseph de Maistre and Louis de Bonald seem to be situated somewhere in a transitional area. One of the characteristics that allows us nonetheless to distinguish between the two types is the acceptance or non-acceptance of elements of the capitalist order. The total rejection of modern industry and of bourgeois society is essential to the restitutionist type, whereas full acceptance of them implies a non-Romantic form of thought (whatever the importance given to tradition, religion, authoritarianism, etc.), as in the case of Auguste Comte's positivism. It is rather the intermediate position, which corresponds to the combination of feudalism and capitalism characteristic of that period in Europe (end of the 18th century, first half of the 19th), that is typical of conservative Romanticism.

A concrete example that may help to clarify these traits is the thought of Edmund Burke. His work belongs without any doubt to Romanticism: passionately hostile to the Enlightenment ("this literary cabal"), in his famous pamphlet against the 1789 Revolution — *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) — Burke opposes the "old feudal and chivalrous spirit of *fealty*" to the new age of "sophists, economists and calculators." He opposes wise and ancient prejudices, product of a "gothic and monkish education," to the barbarous philosophy produced by "cold hearts," and venerable landed property, heritage of our ancestors, to the sordid speculations of Jews and jobbers.[46] This is the reason why his book made such an impact in Germany, where it helped to develop the themes of political Romanticism.

46. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: University Tutorial Press), pp. 56, 78-81, 90, 104, 109, etc. Anti-Semitic comments are frequent in Burke, as they are in many other Romantic anti-capitalist authors — socialists (e.g., Proudhon) as well as conservatives.

However, unlike the restitutionist Romantics Burke is not a truly anti-bourgeois thinker; for his doctrine also has a "liberal" dimension typical of the Whig party to which he belonged. His earlier political interventions in favor of conciliation with the rebellious American colonies and of parliamentarian principles against George III's royal absolutism, won him a reputation of liberalism to an extent that Thomas Paine believed that he would join the camp of the English partisans of the 1789 Revolution.

Burke's political and social ideology is in fact an expression of the compromise between bourgeoisie and landowners which had ruled the political life of England ever since the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 (of which he was a fervent admirer). In a very revealing passage of *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* Burke regrets that in France, unlike England, the mutual convertibility of land into money and of money into land has always been difficult. This tradition, as well as the great mass of landed property held by the French crown and Church, "kept the landed and monied interests more separated in France, less miscible, and the owners of the two distinct species of property not so well disposed to each other as they are in this country."[47]

In spite of his admiration for the hereditary aristocracy and the great landowners, Burke did not at all intend to reserve them the monopoly of power. Political power must be given to all property owners, or rather to what he calls the "natural aristocracy," which includes not only the nobility but also magistrates, professors and "rich traders," who "possess the virtues of diligence, order, constancy, and regularity."[48]

The dimension of nostalgia for the "chivalrous" Middle Ages is not lacking in Burke's writings, but the past does not play the same role as with the restitutionist Romantics; it serves much more as a legitimation of the (English) present than as a criticism of it. The laws, customs, institutions and social hierarchies of England in 1790 are justified as both the natural and the providential result of an organic growth, as an ancestral heritage transmitted over the centuries by each generation, as a part of what he calls "the whole chain and continuity of the Commonwealth."[49]

The influence of Burke is not limited to the German Romantics; his adoption by anti-revolutionary bourgeois liberalism, from his time up to today, is an indicator of the specific character of conservative Romanticism. It is revealing that a contemporary American political

47. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
48. Cited by R. Kirk, *The Conservative Mind* (1954), p. 55.
49. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* p. 99.

scientist, William McGovern, for whom Rousseau, Carlyle, and all the German Romantics are forerunners of the totalitarian doctrines of the 20th century, insists on the other hand that "the political philosophy of Burke was truly liberal" and that "Burke was anti-despotic, and to this extent a believer in democracy" (sic).[50]

3) *Fascist Romanticism*

In dealing with the fascist type of Romantic anti-capitalism it is important to emphasize at the outset that in our view what is involved is one type among many, and one that is far from the most important or essential vis-à-vis the overall phenomenon. In this respect we wish to distinguish ourselves very clearly from those — both anti-fascists and fascists — who have seen the entire history of Romanticism as a prelude to fascism, and Romanticism as indissolubly linked with fascist ideology. As the discussion of the other elements of the typology should unambiguously demonstrate, this is by no means the case. The Romantic anti-capitalist worldview manifests itself in many diverse perspectives that are totally foreign to fascism. It is doubtless also true that starting with the first Romantic movement one already finds elements of what will become fascist ideology much later. In his *Discourse to the German Nation* of 1808, Fichte develops the idea that the German people is superior because it is ancient (an *Urvolk*), and that its duty is to guard its racial purity; one also finds expressions of anti-semitism in von Arnim. It is equally undeniable that fascism drew quite extensively on the thematics of certain neo-Romantics: those of Wagner, Nietzsche, Gobineau and Moeller van den Bruck, for example. But in all these cases only *partial elements* are involved; these are reintegrated into and reinterpreted within the fascist ideology, without their being an overall correspondence between the worldviews of the neo-Romantic authors and that of fascism.

One may only characterize an author as a fascist Romantic if he has adopted the *totality* of the fascist perspective. Since what is involved is a very specific socio-political movement, this implies that the author has explicitly manifested his approval of that movement. Consequently this type of Romanticism comes into being only with the rise of fascism between the two World Wars. To the extent that fascist movements — or ones with a fascist tendency — continue to appear up to the present

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50. W. McGovern, *From Luther to Hitler*, pp. 111-112. See also C.W. Parkin, "Burke and the Conservative Tradition," in David Thomson, ed., *Political Ideas* (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 128: "In the era of worldwide Marxism, Burke's polemic against the revolutionary idea . . . has not lost its relevance or cogency." Concerning Burke's "belief in democracy" (McGovern *dixit*), let us simply recall that for this declared enemy of popular sovereignty "a perfect democracy is the most shameless thing in the world" (*Reflections*, p. 97).

day, this type of Romanticism also continues to subsist today. For there to be a true case of fascist Romanticism, two conditions must in fact be fulfilled: not only must there be expression of approval of the movement, but also adoption of the fascist perspective. The second condition eliminates several writers — such as Paul Ernst, Ernst Jünger and Montherlant, for instance — who on the one hand have neo-Romantic sensibilities, and on the other collaborated or compromised with fascism. For their vision is much closer to restitutionism than to fascism, and they remain foreign bodies when attached to the latter.

However, in spite of all the above limitations on the concept of fascist Romanticism, one is obliged to recognize that it exists, and even that it represents a relatively important tendency. On the one hand there havd been numerous — and some notable — cases of neo-Romantic writers both supporting fascism and embracing its world-view; on the other hand Romantic themes play an absolutely essential role in fascist ideology as it is expressed in the culture of the mass movements themselves. This joining of Romanticism with fascism is particularly noticeable in the case of Nazism. For while the nostalgic reference to Roman antiquity gives a definitely Romantic dimension to Italian fascism, a contradictory theme tends to predominate — the one that is articulated by the Futurists: glorification of urban, industrial and technological life, and the call to go further still in the direction of modernity. Nazi ideoogy, on the other hand, is more thoroughly nostalgic: for the old tribal and feudal Germany, for traditional peasant life in opposition to the frenzied pace of the big city, for the ancient *Gemeinschaften* in contrast with today's *Gesellschaft*. These nostalgias figure in the architecture, the plastic arts and the cinema of the Nazi period, as well as in its literature.[51]

What is specific to Romantic anti-capitalism in its fascist form? First of all, the rejection of capitalism is blended with a violent condemnation of parliamentary democracy as well as of Communism. In addition, anti-capitalism if often colored with anti-Semitism; the capitalists, the rich, and those who incarnate the spirit of the city and of modern life, appear in the guise of the Jew. Thirdly, the Romantic valuation of subjectivity is carried to its furthest limits, becoming glorification of the irrational in its pure form, of brute instinct in its most aggressive manifestations. Thus the Romantic cult of love becomes its opposite — praise of force and cruelty. Finally, in its fascist version the individualistic pole of Romanticism is greatly attenuated or entirely suppressed; in the fascist movement and State the suffering Romantic "I"

51. See Jean-Michel Palmier, *L'Expressionnisme comme révolte* (Paris: Payot, 1978) on the subject of Nazi art and culture.

is obliterated. The periods of the past that are most often the subject of nostalgia are: a prehistory peopled with barbarous, instinctive and violent savages, Greco-Roman antiquity in its elitist, slaveowning and martial aspects, the Middle Ages (in Nazi paintings Hitler sometimes appears as a medieval knight) and the rural *Volksgemeinschaft* already mentioned.

In addition to the rather substantial number of mediocre or worthless neo-Romantic authors who become the official bards of Nazism or of fascism, (the expressionist Hanns Johst, for example), a certain number of writers of quality joined the movement as well. Among those whose work exhibits, in one way or another, the fusion of Romantic anti-capitalism with fascism, one might mention: Drieu la Rochelle and Brasillach in France, Malaparte and d'Annunzio in Italy, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis and Lovecraft in England (and the US), Knut Hamsun in Norway, and H.H. Evers in Germany. But the case we will focus on especially is that of Gottfied Benn, since he illustrates in a particularly striking way the nature of the fascist Romantic type.

Benn, one of the most notable representatives of German expressionism, publicly supported the Hitlerian regime from the moment it took power. Unlike many others, though, he very rapidly grew disillusioned. Benn actively gave his support to Nazism only during a period of two years — from 1933 to 35. There is, however, an essential continuity over the whole of his work, and one finds the same themes — with the exception of the explicit reference to fascism — before he espouses that cause. In his earlier works he expresses his hatred of the modern world — in its bourgeois and capitalist, urban and scientific, but also democratic and socialist aspects — and dreams of a primitive, instinctual past (see, for example, "Primal Vision", 1929). During his short period within the Nazi orbit Benn wrote some ten prose texts that unambiguously reflect fascist ideology. In two of them in particular the Romantic anti-capitalist element of his vision appears most clearly.

The first, and least important, is a favorable review of a work by another fascist Romantic, Julius Evola, entitled *Erhebung wider die moderne Welt* (Revolt Against the Modern World). Benn summarizes — and accepts — the main theme of the book, which is a definition and glorification of what Evola calls the *Traditionswelt*: the world of primitive societies during the period from Homer to Greek tragedy, in the Orient and the Nordic countries as well as in Greece. What follows this period is decay (*Verfall*) and the rise of the degenerate modern world. According to Evola (and Benn agrees), fascism and Nazism for the first time allow modern peoples to reestablish contact with the lost *Traditionswelt*. For Benn, however — and this holds for fascist Romanticism in general — it is not a question of simply returning to the *Traditionswelt*.

In another text from his fascist period he declares that in his view "only today begins the history of man, his danger, his tragedy,"[52] suggesting thereby that man is soon to reach a higher stage of development. Indeed, the fascist perspective is oriented towards the future as well as the past, as is indicated by some of its slogans, such as "New Order," "New Europe," etc.

The past of which Benn dreams is amply developed in a long essay entitled "Dorische Welt." The Doric world, i.e., the Greek states up until the 5th century B.C., is Benn's chosen *Traditionswelt*. In the picture he sketches of it the following are considered to be essential and necessary traits: war, sport that prepares for war, slavery without scruples, "anti-feminism," racism and xenophobia, elitism and powerful State. The image Benn gives of the Doric world in fact makes it resemble National-Socialist society quite closely. But he also emphasizes another characteristic of the Doric as he interprets it: there is no private property in the modern sense, since land in *inalienable*. Moreover there is not really any money, only a very ineffective kind of iron coin. Consequently "gold is not desired, but rather sacred things, magic weapons . . ."[53] Benn's ideal past is thus specifically anti-capitalist. In this context it is interesting to note that in the first text in which Benn declares his disillusionment with the Nazis — "Art and the Third Reich," written in 1941 — he accuses them of wanting to enrich themselves, and therefore of not providing a true alternative to the bourgeois world. This reveals the essential continuity of the Romantic anti-capitalism of Benn, who thought — like a considerable number of others, unfortunately — that he had found in fascism the realization of his hopes.

4) *"Resigned" Romanticism*

Resigned Romanticism emerges mainly from the second half of the 19th century onwards, when capitalist industrialization appears more and more as an irreversible process, and the hope for a restoration of pre-capitalist social relations — still strong at the beginning of the century — tends to disappear. Its grudging acceptance of capitalism brings this variety of Romanticism close to the conservative type, but its social criticism of industrial civilization is much more significant and intense. One might consider many of the writers whose works belong to what Lukács calls "critical realism," to belong to it: for instance, Dickens, Flaubert, and Thomas Mann (Balzac would probably fall in the no man's land between restitutionist and resigned Romanticism). But it is in Germany at the turn of the 19th century that one finds the most

52. Cited by Palmier, *L'Expressionnisme comme révolte*, p. 373.
53. G. Benn, *Essays. Reden. Vorträge* (Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1959), p. 280.

characteristic expressions of this current, mainly among the academic mandarinate and the first great German social scientists. Its major ideological nucleus was the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, founded by Gustav Schmoller, Adolph Wagner and Lujo Brentano, and later joined by Ferdinand Tönnies and Max Weber; its social philosophy was the so-called *Kathedersozialismus.* Other German academics of this period can also be considered as close to resigned Romanticism: Werner Sombart, Alfred Troeltsch, Max Scheler, Georg Simmel, Karl Mannheim, etc. Max Weber probably expressed an attitude common to many of them when he wrote, in an article in 1904 for the journal *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, that we must accept capitalism "not because it seems to us better than the old forms of social structure, but because it is practically inevitable."[54]

Some of these authors were rather traditionalist (Adolph Wagner), while others were more modernizing (Lujo Brentano, Max Weber), some going so far as to support the trade unions and social democracy (Tönnies). In spite of its reformist bent, this current has a profoundly *tragic* dimension, insofar as its pre-capitalist social and cultural values appear as condemned to decline and extinction.[55] Simmel's work is where this tragic dimension manifests itself in the most systematic way, particularly in the important essay "Der Begriff und die Tragödie der Kultur" (*Logos*, Bd. II, 1911-12) and in his *Philosophie des Geldes* (The Philosophy of Money) of 1900.

The most typical representative of the contradictions within resigned Romanticism is probably Ferdinand Tönnies, who is considered to be the founding father of German sociology. In his famous work, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Community and Society; 1887), he contrasts two kinds of sociability: on the one hand the "community" (family, village, small traditional town), its universe governed by harmony, custom, religion, mutual help, and *Kultur*; on the other hand "society" (the large city, the national State, the factory), its world ruled by calculation, profit, the struggle of each against all, and *Zivilisation* as technical and industrial progress. Tönnies' book is intended to be an objective and "value-free" comparison between these two structures, but his nostalgia for the rural, "organic" *Gemeinschaft* is evident: "Community is the true and lasting common life; society is only transitory and superficial. One can, to a certain extent, understand community as a living organism, and society as an artificial and mechanical aggregate." While domestic economy "relies on pleasure, particularly the pleasure

54. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922), p. 159.

55. Cf. Kurt Lenk, "Das tragische Bewusstsein in der Deutschen Soziologie," in *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* (1964).

and love of production, creation and conservation," the big city and the *Gesellschaft* in general "represents the corruption and death of the people."[56] *Gemeinschaft*, of course, refers to pre-capitalist communities and forms of life (not necessarily medieval), while *Gesellschaft* embodies all the traits of industrial/capitalist society. The opposition between two forms — or the contrast between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* — became one of the main themes of Romantic anti-capitalism in Germany at the turn of the century.

What characterizes Tönnies as a "resigned" Romantic author is the tragic conviction that return to the *Gemeinschaft* is an illusion, and that social decadence is inevitable, like the decline of a living organism that cannnt return to its youthful days.[57] Tönnies looked with sympathy on the trade unions and consumers' cooperatives an neo-communitarian organisms that corrected the excesses of modern industrial society, but he did not believe in the possibility of restoring the authentic *Gemeinschaft* of the past.

5) Liberal Romanticism

The first problem one encounters in attempting to deal with the phenomenon of liberal Romanticism, is that at the beginning of the 19th century — the period in which the most noteworthy cases of the type are concentrated — there existed a considerable confusion in terminology. The term "liberal" — as well as "democratic," "republican," and "socialist," for example — was given vague and multifarious meanings; moreover, the distinctions between the different terms were far from being precise. Thus Victor Hugo defined his political position after 1830 as *at the same time* liberal, socialist and democratic.[58] At that time the term "liberal" possessed at least two different meanings: on the one hand a political tendency linked to a party that reflected the interests of the rising bourgeoisie against ecclesiastical and aristocratic reaction; on the other a considerably broader movement of opinion and ideas, that today would be called "progressive" in the largest sense of orientation towards change and the future.

This terminological confusion means that it is impossible to arrive at a coherent definition of the phenomenon if one relies on what the authors of the period said about their own politics. However, even if we admit that, and even if we also admit that in many concrete instances a precise categorization is extremely difficult to make, it does nonethe-

56. F. Tönnies, *Communauté et société* (Paris: P.U.F., 1944), pp. 5, 236-37.

57. Tönnies responded to young disciples who favored the reestablishment of community by saying that one cannot combat the process of aging. Cf. J. Leif, *La Sociologie de Tönnies* (Paris: P.U.F., 1946), p. 71.

58. See D.O. Evans, *Le Socialisme romantique: Pierre Leroux et ses contemporains* (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1948), p. 174.

less seem clear that a liberal Romanticism exists and more specifically that a meaningful distinction can be made between it and "Jacobin-democratic" Romanticism. We will define liberal Romanticism as the perspective that, while critical of the modern bourgeois world, does not draw the radical conclusions following from this criticism, and is content to simply call for reforms rather than more fundamental change. These Romantics, then, make their peace with the status quo, at least to some degree, and they back off when faced with the perspective of social upheaval. While they, like the Jacobin-democrats, take as their point of reference the French Revolution and its values, they look to its most moderate elements — the Girondins rather than the Jacobins — for their ideal. Most often their revolutionary ardor is expressed in vague, sentimental and mythical terms, and they tend to leave aside the question of class exploitation.

The liberal Romantics are not to be confused, however, with pure and simple liberals. The latter — for example, Victor Cousin and Paul-Louis Courier in France, and Bentham and the Utilitarians in England — are totally lacking in the critical dimension and the nostalgia for the past that characterize the Romantic vision. In them we find simply a celebration of the new bourgeois order and of its victory over the forces of the past. The Romantic anti-capitalist liberals, on the other hand, constitute an astonishing contradiction, for they are at one and the same time critical and non-critical vis-à-vis the present. In our view this paradox might be explained by two factors, one historically contingent and the other essential to Romanticism. In the first place, this contradictory type arises out of the historical situation of the early 19th century, most particularly that of the Restoration in France. In that context it quite easily could appear that the source of the evils of the present — and consequently the principal enemy to be combated — was not the bourgeois order but aristocratic reaction and all that remained of the Old Regime. Moreover, there did not yet exist a clear awareness of the new social forces at work, of the splitting up of the Third Estate into two antagonistic classes. An beyond the horizons of past and present the possibility of a future *tertium datur* was not yet visible. Under these conditions the choice could seem to be the following: to keep the purity of one's revolt against the present by opting for the past (that is, for restitutionism, Balzac being an excellent case in point); or, to accept a compromise with the present, while hoping to reform it — to eliminate or diminish its most flagrant wrongs.

However, although this type of Romanticism is found mainly in the above historical situation, it nonetheless represents a possible permutation of Romantic anti-capitalism at any moment in its development, by virtue of an aspect of its very nature. For we have claimed that

one of the two poles of value for Romanticism is the subjective self. And, although in the final analysis there is a profound and explosive conflict between this subjective self and individualism in the socio-economic realm, this conflict often remains latent and hidden. This allows for a possible affinity between the cult of the Romantic individual and the individualism of bourgeois liberalism; it is at this precise point that Romanticism joins its opposite, and runs the risk of being transformed into its opposite.

These two factors — probably with different relative importance in each case — contributed to make of Michelet, Lamartine, Sainte-Beuve and Hugo the hybrid phenomenon we are terming liberal Romanticism. The latter two are instructive to compare, since they illustrate two modalities of this contradictory state of being. It is Pierre Barbéris who has provided us with the most incisive analyses of French liberal Romanticism in general, and more specifically of Sainte-Beuve and Hugo. In an excellent study of *Joseph Delorme*, Barbéris demonstrates that in Sainte-Beuve the coexistence of liberalism and Romantic revolt takes the form of a split between two kinds of writings: the articles and the literary works. In the former — "on the level of clear consciousness and abstract analysis" — Sainte-Beuve shows himself to be a classic liberal, whereas only in literary creation does his unhappy, problematic and rebellious consciousness express itself. This may explain the violent condemnation of *Joseph Delorme* by the liberals; and, as Barbéris points out, the fact the Sainte-Beuve chose to reissue the book after 1830 would indicate that its real subject is not the Restoration but the bourgeois order.[59]

In the case of Hugo, on the other hand, the contradiction is internal to the literary production. In a detailed analysis of the "Châtiments", Barbéris reveals a bourgeois ideology at work that is critical only of "pre-liberal oppression" and that sees in the progress of science and technology the future solution for the ills of the present, whereas in the same poem one also finds nostalgia for the old France of countryside and handicraft. Barbéris concludes that "with Hugo . . . the juxtaposition remains unresolved of a non-capitalist worldview . . . and a grandiose vision of the new industrial society — but at the price of refusing to see what *kind* of industrial society is being set up."[60] The date of the "Châtiments" (1853) indicates that liberal Romanticism by no means disappears after the Restoration; in certain cases the illusion of harmony between Romanticism and liberalism subsists long afterwards. In other works by Hugo, of course, and most particularly in *Les Mis-*

59. "Signification de *Joseph Delorme* en 1830," in P. Barbéris, *Lectures du réel* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1973).

60. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

érables, there is a more pronounced anti-bourgeois dimension. Yet in spite of the fact that he was a political chameleon, and that in certain respects he might seem to be close to the "Jacobin-democrats" or even to humanitarian socialism, Hugo's work in general, after an early monarchist period, seems to correspond to the paradoxical phenomenon of liberal Romanticism: Hugo, for whom the writer's role is to give full expression to his epoch, expressed in fact both its contradictory sides — not only its revolt but also its integration.

6) I — *Jacobin-democratic Romanticism*

The very existence of a type of Romantic anti-capitalism that can be termed "Jacobin-democratic" is eloquent proof against the affirmation that there is an absolute opposition between Romanticism and Enlightenment. Far from there being a necessary contradiction and conflict between the two movements, an important component of the former is the spiritual heir of the latter, the filiation most often passing through Rousseau, who is to be located at the junction between the two. What characterizes this type of Romanticism — and what distinguishes it from the liberal type — is that it mounts a radical critique *both* of oppression by forces from the past — the monarchy, the aristocracy and the Church — and of the new bourgeois oppression. This double critique is made (except of course in the case of writers — particularly Rousseau — who preceded it) in the name of the French Revolution and of the values represented by its most radical wing, Jacobinism. The Jacobin allegiance is sometimes accompanied by Bonapartism, to the extent that Napoleon is seen as an effective and heroic extension of Jacobinism; the admiration for Bonaparte often stops, however, at the 18th Brumaire. In contrast to liberals, the Jacobin-democrats do not call for slow evolution, compromise and moderate solutions, but for revolutionary turning points and profound upheavals.

We are placing Jacobin-democratic Romanticism first among the "revolutionary/utopian" types because it comes first chronologically. This current, which is clearly distinguishable from the purely rationalist form of radicalism (e.g., Godwin) is to be found in all the principal countries of the first wave of Romanticism. And naturally it manifests itself in the country of the Revolution. Following Rousseau the Jacobins themselves may by included in the French line of development, since their impassioned idealization of antiquity represents a clearly Romantic nostalgia. It is to be noted, however, that the most radical version of Jacobinism — that of Buonarroti and Babeuf — comes close to communism and thus tends to fall outside the bounds of the type under consideration. In the years following the Revolution, among those who were both Jacobins and Bonapartists we might men-

tion Stendhal and Musset — the Musset of the introduction to *Confession d'un enfant du siècle.* In Germany, where the first Romantics were briefly Jacobin-democrats before becoming restitutionists, several important writers — Hölderlin, Büchner and Heine — never abandoned their original perspective.

Heine, an anti-Romantic who finally admitted to being at heart a Romantic, saw the French Revolution as the agent for the redemption of humanity: "Freedom is a new religion, the religion of our age . . . The French . . . are the chosen people . . . Paris is the new Jerusalem, and the Rhine is the Jordan which divides the consecrated land of liberty from the land of the Philistines."[61] At the end of his life, after a number of shifts to the Left and to the Right of this position, Heine reaffirmed as the unifying principle of his thought "an unchanging devotion to the cause of humanity, to the democratic ideas of the Revolution."[62] The case of Heine is particularly interesting with respect to the past for which he is nostalgic. In his "aveux de l'auteur" (author's confessions) which conclude *De l'Allemagne,* he reveals that, although once a philhellene (like most Jacobin-democrats), he has recently turned back to his Judaic antecedents; and he affirms that the true prefiguration of the French Revolution is neither ancient Greece with its slavery, nor Rome with its legalistic chicanery, but rather Mosaic law and the customs of ancient Judaism.

In England also there is a significant tradition of Jacobin-democrats. The first to be mentioned is Blake, whose poem, *The French Revolution* (1790-91), is written from a Jacobin point of view, and who continued in later poems to represent in mythical form the struggle of the principle of liberation which the Revolution had momentarily brought to life. Subsequently there was the Jacobin episode of Coleridge and of Wordsworth — to which we have already alluded — and lastly the more durable radicalism of the second generation of English Romantics, notably that of Byron and Shelley.

Jacobin-democratic Romanticism, then, is rather narrowly circumscribed in time: beginning with Rousseau, it is concentrated mainly in the Revolutionary period and its immediate aftermath. Its last great representative is perhaps Heine. This current of thought is limited in time by its very nature, which is to make a radical indictment of the present in the name of the values of the French Revolution; for with its transformation into a founding myth of the victorious bourgeoisie, the Revolution can no longer serve as sole reference point for a radical

61. In *Englische Fragmente,* cited in W. Rose, "Heine's Political and Social Attitude," in *Heinrich Heine: Two Studies of his Thought and Feeling* (Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 16.

62. In the preface to the French edition of *Lutezia*, cited in *ibid.*, p. 86.

critique of the present (and of the past — oriented, that is, towards the future) if the critique is to remain radical. With the birth of the socialist and labor movements the authentic critique must change if it is not to negate itself.[63] Heine, who — especially during the period of his association with Marx — was fascinated and tempted by communism without ever committing himself to it, and also Shelley, represent the extreme limits of Jacobin-democratic Romanticism, beyond which it becomes transformed into other "revolutionary/utopian" types. With Heine and Shelley the worldview is at the point of mutation, and this characteristic differentiates them from earlier representatives of the type. Lukács notes this difference between Hölderlin and Shelley, and (rightly) affirms that "a Hölderlin of a later time who did not follow the path of Shelley, would not have been a Hölderlin, but rather a narrow, classicist liberal."[64]

The difference is so striking that some have gone so far as to portray Shelley as a socialist. In particular, Marx's daughter and son-in-law — Eleanor Marx Aveling and Edward Aveling — attempted to demonstrate just that in an essay entitled "Shelley's Socialism."[65] In this text they claim that there is a fundamental difference between the essentially bourgeois radicalism of Byron, and that of Shelley, who speaks in the name of the proletariat. But while the dissimilarity between Byron and Shelley is real enough, in our opinion what is involved is a variation *within the same type*, and the identification of Shelley with Socialism is untenable. For in spite of the fact that in several poems — especially "The Mask of Anarchy" (1819) — he makes himself the advocate of rebellious workers and violently condemns the condition of the working class as a kind of slavery, Shelley never goes so far as to place private property in question, and his ideological reference point always remains Jacobin-democratic radicalism.

His political perspective is unaltered, in fact, from the early poem "Queen Mab" (1812) to "Ode to Liberty" (1820) and "Hellas" (1821), written the year before his death. Shelley's historical, social and political vision is perhaps most fully expressed in these last two works. Unlike Rousseau, Shelley experiences no nostalgia for primitive man; for according to him, although liberty was inscribed in the world itself by God at the creation, it succeeds in manifesting itself for the first

63. The only exception would appear to be the Third World, where retarded socio-economic development has allowed an authentic Jacobin-democratic Romanticism to persist until recently, for example in the case of José Marti, Fidel Castro in his first period, etc.

64. Lukács, *Werke*, Vol. 7, p. 182.

65. First limited edition, 1888; republication by Journeyman Press, London, 1975.

time, after a long initial period of barbarism, only in ancient Greece: "Let there be light! said Liberty . . ./ Athens arose!"[66] After a brief continuation of its reign in Rome, liberty suffers a long eclipse, at first due to the tyrannies of throne and altar, and later to the greed for money. In the modern era of revolution liberty is preparing to return to earth, but this time at a higher level, and definitively. For Shelley, "The coming age is shadowed on the Past/ As on a glass," and "The world's great age begins anew,/ The golden years return." But in ancient Greece only "Prophetic echoes flung dim melody," and the world to come will be "A brighter Hellas." It will constitute a return, but the return will be to the mythical and utopian age of Saturn rather than to an actual state of Greece in antiquity: "Saturn and Love their long repose/ Shall burst . . ./ Not gold, not blood, their alter dowers,/ But votive tears and symbol flowers."[67] For Shelley the future will not be the simple recreation of a real past, but rather the coming to full flower of all its qualities, qualities that were only in bud in the past era; the future will thus represent a total fulfillment such as never existed before, a utopia of love and beauty.

6) II — *Populist Romanticism*

Sismondi's work inaugurates populism as an economic doctrine, but it is in Russia that this trend — for reasons which have to do both with the social structure of the country and the situation of its intellectuals during the second half of the 19th century — is most fully developed as a social philosophy and as a political movement. Economists such as B. Efroussi, V. Vorontsov and Nicolai — on (pseudonym for N. Danielson, who corresponded for many years with Marx and Engels), all more or less influenced by Sismondi, sociologists like Mikhailovsky, and above all "nihilist" revolutionary philosophers like Herzen, are the main representatives of Romantic populism. They saw in the traditional Russian rural community (*obchtchina*) the foundation for a specifically Russian road to socialism, and rejected both tzarist autocracy and Western capitalist civilization. The political manifestation of populism was the movement *Narodnaya Volya* (The Will of the People), which wanted to "go the the people" and win the peasantry to the new revolutionary ideas. Of all great Russian writers Tolstoy is certainly the one with the greatest affinity for the populist cult of the peasantry.

J.C. Sismonde de Sismondi was far from being a revolutionary, but his rigorous and radical criticism of capitalism elicited the admiration of Marx, who considered him in certain respects superior to Ricardo.

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66. Shelley, *Selected Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 292.
67. The quotation: "Prophetic echoes flung dim melody" is from "Ode to Liberty," and all the others are from "Hellas."

In opposition to classical economy, his analysis of economic reality is inspired by a moral principle: "I will always struggle against the industrial system which has made cheap of human life."[68] Sismondi rejects wealth as an end in itself — what he calls "Chrematistics" — and the reduction of men to the condition of machines. Marx, in the *Communist Manifesto*, although criticizing Sismondi for being a utopian and a "petty-bourgeois socialist," pays him hommage for having provided an irrefutable demonstration of the deadly consequences of machinism, division of labor, over-production, crises, etc.

This criticism of the capitalist system is Romantic, since it refers constantly to a pre-capitalist Golden Age — especially to the Italian Republics of the Middle Ages — and dreams of a patriarchal society of small artisans and small peasant landowners, associated in corporatist or communitarian structures. In a characteristic passage from his major work, *The New Principles of Political Economy* (1819), he writes: "In the countries where the farmer is owner, and where the fruits of the earth belong entirely to the people who do all the labor — countries whose form of exploitation [of the land] we will designate as patriarchal — one sees everywhere signs of the cultivator's love for the house he lives in and the land he takes care of."[69] Sismondi refuses, however, to be considered as "an enemy of social progress" and insists that his desire is not to restore what used to be, but to create "something better than that which is now" through certain social reforms: the partition of large landed properties and of enterprises, etc.

The continuity between these economic ideas and those of the Russian populists almost a hundred years later is undeniable, even though the latter gave a much more revolutionary coloring to the same program. In 1887 Lenin wrote a pamphlet entitled *A Characterization of Economic Romanticism (Sismondi and Our National Sismondists)*, in which he sharply attacked the Populists and totally condemned the work of Sismondi as reactionary. Rosa Luxemburg, however, in her book *The Accumulation of Capital* (1911), defends Sismondi against Lenin's criticism and praises his criticism of capisalism as well as his having raised some essential questions for the development of Marxist political economy.

6) III — *Utopian-Humanist Socialism*

The Romantic authors related to this current build imaginary models for a socialist alternative to industrial/bourgeois civilization, using

68. Sismondi, *Etudes sur l'économie politique* (Trenttel et Wurtz, 1837), Vol. 1, p. 209.

69. Sismondi, *Nouveaux Principes de l'économie politique* (Paris: 2nd Edition, 1827), Vol. 1, pp. 165-66.

as reference points certain social paradigms and certain pre-capitalist ethical or religious values. Their criticism of capitalism is not formulated in the name of one class — the proletariat — but in the name of *humanity* as a whole, and it is addressed to all men of good will. Those who are usually designated as "utopian socialists" are not always Romantics. Owen and Saint-Simon, for instance, are above all men of the Enlightenment, favoring industry and progress. Among those who do belong to the Romantic socialist type we might mention French authors like Fourier, Cabet, Enfantin (and most of the Saint-Simonians), Leroux and (to a certain extent) George Sand. In 19th-century Germany there is the so-called "true socialism" (Karl Grün) and Moses Hess; and, in the 20th century, expressionist writers like Ernst Toller, Marxist-humanist philosophers like Erich Fromm, etc.

A very illuminating example of this kind of socialism is the work of Moses Hess — in particular his youthful writings (1837-45). His first book, *The Sacred History of Humanity* (1837), is probably the one in which the presence of the Romantic *Weltanschauung* goes deepest. In it Hess develops a political-messianic interpretation of history, and looks back to antiquity as an era of social harmony based on the common ownership of goods. Private property destroyed this original equilibrium, permitting the rise of industry and commerce, accompanied by inequality, egoism and social injustice. The messianic task of the future is to suppress inheritance and private property "in order that the primitive equality among men may be re-established," opening the way for the advent of a New Jerusalem, a New Eden, the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.[70] Strongly influenced by Fourier — whose concept of social harmony is the central theme of the book — Hess outlines a radical critique of capitalism, of the new aristocracy of wealth and industry, which is only increasing the riches of the few at the expense of the misery of the majority.[71]

While this work evoked little response, the next book published by Hess, *The European Triarchy* (1841), had a considerable impact on the critical intelligentsia (particularly the neo-Hegelians) in Germany. Hess proposes the constitution of Europe as a unified "organism," based on a spiritual alliance between France, Germany and England, which will bring the Kingdom of God on earth. In a typically Romantic short cut between the past and the future, he writes: "What the Holy Jewish State in antiquity, or the Holy Roman Empire of the Middle Ages used to be, Roman-German Europe will be in the future: the

70. Moses Hess, *Die heilige Geschichte der Menschheit, von einem Jünger Spinozas* (Stuttgart: 1837), p. 249. Cf. also pp. 235-37, 249, 257, etc.

71. *Ibid.* Cf. also A. Cornu, *Karl Marx et Friedrich Engels* (Paris: P.U.F., 1955), Vol. I, pp. 237-38.

pupil in the eyes of God, the central point from which the world is led."[72]

The socialist ideas implicit in these books become progessively clearer in a series of essays and articles by Hess during the years 1842-45, in the *Rheinische Zeitung*, the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, the *Neue Anekdoten* and the *Rheinische Jahrbücher*. These pieces oppose the communist principle of Humanity to the principle of Egoism, the Spirit of Mammon, and the socialist community of the future to the egotistical, "inorganic" individual of bourgeois society. The most important of these essays is probably "The Essence of Money," written in 1843 and published in 1845, which exerted a very significant influence on the young Marx. This text passionately criticizes monetary alienation, the domination of the god-money over people, the system of selling human freedom that characterizes our society. For Hess, the modern mercantile world (*moderne Schacherwelt*), of which money is the essence, is worse than ancient slavery because it is "unnatural and inhuman that people sell themselves voluntarily." The task of communism is to abolish money and its malefic power, and to establish an organic community (*organische Gemeinschaft*) of authentically human life.[73]

6) IV — *Libertarian Romanticism*

Libertarian or anarchist (or anarcho-syndicalist) Romanticism, which opposes to industrial capitalism and the centralized State the utopia of a federation of small communities (consisting mainly of peasants and artisans), and which lays claim to values or traditions of the pre-capitalist "people," reached its zenith at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. One also finds in anarchism a rationalist, *Aufklärer* tendency that is rather foreign to Romanticism. But most of the "classic" libertarian thinkers like Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Elisée Reclus, etc., are without doubt Romantic anti-capitalists. This applies equally to the revolutionary syndicalist circle connected with the journal *Mouvement Socialiste* in France (Georges Sorel, Hubert Lagardelle, Edouard Berth), to Jean Grave and his symbolist friends, and to the Jewish anarchist Bernard Lazare (a friend of Charles Peguy). In Germany one might mention Gustav Landauer, his friend the poet Erich Mühsam, and to a certain extent Martin Buber. Some writers also can be associated with this worldview: Strindberg,

72. M. Hess, *Die europäische Triarchie* (1841), in *Ausgewählte Schriften* (Köln: Melzer Verlag, 1962), p. 91.

73. M. Hess, "Über das Geldwesen" (1845), in *Sozialistische Aufsätze 1841-47*, ed. Theodor Zlocisti (Berlin: Welt-Verlag, 1921), pp. 168, 185. It is interesting to note that Hess appends to his essay a long quotation from *Queen Mab*, in which Shelley expresses horror at the modern idolatry of money.

Oscar Wilde, and Kafka.

Perhaps the most typical representative of libertarian Romanticism is Gustav Landauer. Writer, literary critic, social philosopher, leader of the Munich Commune of 1919 (he was killed by the counter-revolution after the defeat of the Bavarian Councils Republic), Landauer was influenced in his youth by Wagner and Nietzsche, before he became an anarchist. However, from the beginning he distinguished himself from the author of *Zarathustra* not only by his revolutionary orientation but also by his interest in religious spirituality (in 1903 he published a translation of the mystical writings of Master Eckart). Landauer shares with "classical" German Romanticism a deep nostalgia for medieval Christianity: "Christianity, with its gothic towers and battlements, . . . with its corporations and fraternities, was a *Volk* in the most powerful and elevated sense of the word: an intimate fusion of the economic and cultural community with the spiritual bond (*Geistesbund*)."[74]

On the contrary, modern, capitalist England "with its sterile industrial system, its desolation of the land, its uniformization of the masses and of misery, with its production for the world market instead of true needs," is for him the sinister image of contemporary civilization. He bitterly reproaches Marx, "that son of the steam engine," for admiring the technical achievements of capitalism. For him the task of socialism is not to perfect the industrial system but to help mankind *rediscover* culture,*Geist*, freedom and community.[75]

Radically hostile to the State and bourgeois society, Landauer exhorted the socialists to withdraw from this decadent and corrupt social universe, and to establish autonomous rural communities united in a free federation. Rather than a general strike or insurrection, the road that leads to libertarian socialism is the abandonment of the capitalist economy and the building of a socialist *Gemeinschaft, hic et nunc*, in the rural areas of Germany.[76]

However, it would be wrong to present Landauer as a partisan of the pure and simple restoration of past social and cultural forms. He acknowledges the importance and value of certain achievements of civilization: the *Aufklärung,* the abolition of superstitions, the development of science. He aspires to create a *new society* with both modern *Zivilisation* and pre-capitalist *Kultur* as its basis, a society that would be authentically communitarian, free and egalitarian, with State or social

74. Gustav Landauer, "Volk und Land: Dreissig sozialistische Thesen" (1907), in *Beginnen: Aufsätze über Sozialismus* (Köln: Marcon-Block-Verlag, 1924), pp. 8-9.
75. Landauer, *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* (Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1919), pp. 47-48.
76. Landauer, "Der Bund," in *Beginnen*, pp. 91-140.

classes.[77]

6) V — *Marxist Romanticism*

The Romantic element that is unquestionably present in the works of Marx and Engels — one need only recall their sympathy with the Russian populists and their hope that the traditional rural district (*obchtchina*) would serve as the germ of a future socialist Russia — has been denied by official Marxism (strongly influenced by evolutionism, positivism and Fordism) and by the Second and Third Internationals. In the writings of Kautsky, Plekhanov and Bukharin — not to mention Stalin — one looks in vain for any trace of the Romantic heritage. The first important attempt at a neo-Romantic reinterpretation of Marxism is that of William Morris at the end of the 19th century. Morris' perspective has recently been taken up again and developed by the British historians E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams. But it is principally in the area of German culture — and entirely unrelated to the English developments — that one finds authors who consider themselves Marxists but at the same time are strongly marked by the Romantic critique of capitalism. The work of these authors constitutes perhaps the summit of the 20th-century Marxist philosophy: the young Lukács, Ernst Bloch, and the Frankfurt School (particularly Benjamin and Marcuse). One also finds in certain Third World countries — especially among the founders of the communist movement in the 1920s — thinkers who look to pre-capitalist social traditions in their countries as a possible socio-cultural basis for the revolutionary movement: José Carlos Mariategui in Peru, and Li-Ta-Chao in China.

What distinguishes this trend from other socialist or revolutionary currents exhibiting a Romantic sensibility, is the central preoccupation with essential problems of Marxism: class struggle, social revolution, the role of the proletariat as universal class and agent of emancipation, the possibility of using modern productive forces in a socialist economy — even if the conclusions drawn are not necessarily identical with Marx and Engels'.

Ernst Bloch's writings are probably the most important example of Marxist Romanticism in the 20th century. He has been called a "Marxist Schelling" — and indeed, in an autobiographical interview he recalled that the four volumes of Schelling's *Philosophie der Mythologie und Offenbarung* were among the first philosophical books he read with awe and fascination.[78] A student of Georg Simmel — at whose seminar he

77. Landauer, *Aufruf*, pp. 100-102.

78. See *Tagträume vom aufrechten Gang: Sechs Interviews mit Ernst Bloch,* ed. Arno Münster (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 27-28.

first met Lukács — and a member of Max Weber's circle in Heidelberg, Bloch broke with his masters because of their support for the "German Fatherland" in 1914, but he nonetheless incorporated some elements of their criticism of modern bureaucratic *Zivilisation* into his world-view.

Written during the war, *Geist der Utopie* (1918-23) owes much of its power of attraction up to the present day to its remarkable fusion of anti-capitalist Romanticism and apocalyptic, revolutionary Marxism. Typically Romantic, for instance, is its rapturous paean to Gothic art, whose "central fire" contains both the "deepest organic and the deepest spiritual being," and whose "alchemical measure" was not the sun, or astrology, but "Man, Man in his deepest interiority, as Christ."[79] In the first edition of the book he goes so far as to call for a utopian society composed only of peasants, artisans, "a nobility without serfs and without war," and "a spiritual aristocracy" — i.e., "a humanity which is *ritterlich* and pious once more."[80] Explaining this astonishing formulation, Bloch told one of the present authors (M. Löwy) in an interview in 1974: "The new aristocracy I was talking about was, therefore, *not profitable* economically, that is, not founded on exploitation, but on the contrary it had ascetic and chivalrous virtues"; and he added that Marx's own criticism of capitalism as an "unfair" system is based on a standard of values that "goes back to the Code of the Knights, to the Code of King Arthur's Round Table."[81] In the second edition of the book (1923) this passage disappears and is replaced by a Marxist definition of social utopia: from each according to his capacities, to each according to his needs. He now criticizes the "Romanticism of the new reaction," which is "without spirit and unchristian (*geistlos und unchristlich*)," but clings to the "truly Christian" medieval idea of Humanity.[82] The Romantic reference to pre-capitalist values is still essential to his *Weltanschauung*, although he distinguishes between two different traditions, going back respectively to Thomas Münzer and to his enemies, the "heraldic robbers."

In *Thomas Münzer, the Theologian of Revolution* (1921), he sees the Bolsheviks as the inheritors of the first tradition, which he traces back — as the "underground history of the Revolution" — to the Cathars and the Russites, Münzer and the Anabaptists, Meister Eckardt and Sebastian

79. Ernst Bloch, *Geist der Utopie,* 2nd edition: 1923 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973) pp. 37, 39.

80. Bloch, *Geist der Utopie,* 1st edition: 1918 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), p. 410.

81. See M. Löwy, "Interview with Ernst Bloch," in *New German Critique,* 9 (Fall, 1976), 42.

82. Bloch, *Geist der Utopie* (1923), pp. 294-95.

Frank, Rousseau and Tolstoy. Bloch wrote an afterword for the 1960 republication of the book, in which he himself refers to its spirit as "Romantic revolutionary." It is interesting to notice that among the pre-capitalist *Gemeinschaften* which appear as the most positive moments of the past, there is precisely the period that the *Aufklärung* and modern historiography consider to be a regression to barbarism and a Dark Age of decline: the centuries following the fall of the Roman Empire, the Low Middle Ages. Bloch hails the falling apart of the ancient abstract-bureaucratic form of State, and of the money economy, and their replacement by the Germanic vestiges of agrarian communism, i.e., by a society based on fidelity (*Treue*), tradition (*Herkommen*), piety (*Pietät*), warmth and patriarcal simplicity.[83]

Romantic anti-capitalism remains a crucial component of Bloch's later Marxist philosophy, aesthetics and politics. It is at the root of his defense of expressionism against Lukács' criticism in the 1930s, as well as of his political analysis — in *Heritage of Our Times* (1935) — of the rebellion against capitalist rationality by the "non-synchronic" classes of Germany.[84] The same applies to his *magnum opus, Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (1953-59), in which he calls for the uniting of rational Marxist analysis — *'der kälteste Detektiv'* — with the warm spirit of the *Märchen* and with the dream of the Golden Age.[85] Nostalgia forthe past, imaginary representation of a different world, and hope for a better future, are intimately linked in Bloch's peculiar understanding of historical materialism and revolutionary praxis.

One of the characteristic aspects of Bloch's Romantic Marxism is the reference to religious traditions — Jewish and Christian, heretical and mystical, from the Biblical prophets to the Kabbalah and from Joachim di Fiore to Karl Barth. Of course it is an "atheistic religion," or a secularized one, but it gives his theory of socialist revolution a uniquely millenarian quality.[86]

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83. Bloch, *Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), pp. 156, 228, 230.

84. For Bloch "the fact that it was the Nazis and not the Left who gave political form to the utopian substance embedded in the Romantic anti-capitalism of the German peasantry and *Mittelstand,* does not reduce the authentic impulses to be discovered there." Anson Rabinbach, "Ernst Bloch's *Heritage of Our Times* and the Theory of Fascism," in *New German Critique*, 11 (Spring, 1977), 11.

85. Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), Vol. III, p. 1621.

86. On the mystical and apocalyptic aspects of his early work, see Arno Münster, *Utopie, Messianismus und Apokalypse in Frühwerk von Ernst Bloch* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982).

Having attempted to define Romantic anti-capitalism as a whole and then to sketch out a typology of its principal variants, it remains to raise the question of the sociological explanation of the phenomenon. What are the social bases of Romanticism? Is it possible to link that worldview to one or several social groups? Although Marxist analyses do not, generally speaking, offer very well-developed hypotheses on this point, one does find a certain number of sociological explanations in them, albeit schematic and limited in scope. On the whole these explanations seem inadequate to fully comprehend Romanticism.

Among the explanations proposed, the one that in our view is the most erroneous sees in Romanticism an essentially bourgeois phenomenon. Thus, for Leo Löwenthal Romanticism is a form of "bourgeois consciousness," and according to Arnold Hauser the fact that its public is composed of members of that class reveals the "essentially bourgeois [character] of the movement" and of its ideology.[87] This reduction of Romanticism to a bourgeois ideology — illustrated here by critics whose work in other respects is of high quality — is in fact the dogmatic commonplace of those who violently deny the affinities between the Marxist and the Romantic worldviews. The error of this position is to ignore the *essence* of the Romantic phenomenon. For in spite of the fact that a part of its authors and public belong to the bourgeoisie, Romanticism represents a deep-seated revolt against this class and the society that it rules. If Romanticism is in its essence anti-capitalist, it is the antithesis of a bourgeois ideology. Doubtless, we ourselves have pointed out possible *rapprochements* with a bourgeois state of mind and a bourgeois status quo — particularly in the cases of "conservative" and "liberal" Romanticism. But in our view these are precisely extreme cases in which Romanticism is in danger of negating itself and of becoming its opposite.

Sometimes Marxist analyses associate Romanticism with other social classes, however, in particular with the aristocracy and the *petite bourgeoisie*. According to Jacques Droz, although most German Romantics belong to the latter class, they express the ideology of the former: they "in fact only served the interests of the old ruling classes, i.e., the nobility, the corporations and the Churches"; their work was "the expression of the old ruling classes' consciousness of the danger that awaited them."[88] Conversely, for the East German critic G. Heinrich the very same German Romanticism articulates "the class interests of certain strata of the *petite bourgeoisie*," and Ernst Fischer finds that, more

87. L. Löwenthal, *Erzählkunst und Gesellschaft* (Luchterhand, 1971); Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte,* Vol. II, p. 185.

88. Droz, *Le Romantisme allemand et l'Etat*, p. 295; see also *Le Romantisme politique en Allemagne,* pp. 28-29.

generally, "the Romantic attitude could not be other than confused, for the petty bourgeoisie was the very embodiment of social contradiction . . ."[89] In our opinion, however, both of these interpretations are one-sided; neither one is entirely false, but each gives only a partial explanation and needs to be integrated into a more complete explanatory framework.

Barbéris' work on Romanticism has the merit of offering a multidimensional explanation. He sees at the sources of French Romanticism an historical conjunction of the aspirations and interests of several different social groups marginalized by Capital: in particular, "aristocrats dispossessed" by the bourgeoisie and the younger generations of bourgeois "without endowment, which ran up against the barrier of money and found no way of employing themselves . . ."[90] In spite of its merits, however, this more complex sociological analysis remains too limited. In the first place, it seems insufficient to stop at mention of the aristocracy and *petite bourgeoisie* alone (or young bourgeois who have not yet "arrived"), at least if one wishes to take into account the overall phenomenon of Romantic anti-capitalism as we conceive it. In addition, although Barbéris is well aware that the flood tide of Romanticism swells with *diverse victims* of the bourgeoisie and its social order, most often he conceives of the oppression as operating only at the economic level. Thus, he seems to see the Romantic revolt of young petty bourgeois mainly as a reaction to frustrated ambition and insufficient employment opportunities. But although this motive doubtlessly played some role in the genesis of Romanticism, it cannot by itself explain the latter. It cannot adequately account for the force and depth of the critique of a whole socio-economic order. Far more important, in our view, is the *experience of alienation and reification*, and sociological analysis must pose the problem in terms of differential sensitivity to this experience within the social totality. In conclusion, then, we will put forward a number of propositions that take that direction.

First of all, most of the usual analyses of the social framework of Romanticism fail to take into consideration an essential category for the understanding of the phenomenon: the *intelligentsia*, a group made up of individuals coming from varied social backgrounds but which possesses a unity and (relative) autonomy due to its position in the process of the production of culture. One of the exceptions is Karl Mannheim, who demonstrates in his remarkable essay on conservative thought in Germany that those who represent the Romantic move-

89. Gerda Heinrich, *Geschichtsphilosophische Positionen der deutschen Frühromantik* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976), p. 60; E. Fischer, *The Necessity of Art*, p. 53.

90. Barbéris, "Mal du siècle," *op. cit.*, pp. 165, 171.

ment are essentially *freischwebende Intellektuelle.*[91] Generally speaking, it is clear that the *producers* of the Romantic anti-capitalist worldview are *certain traditional sectors of the intelligentsia*, whose culture and way of life are hostile to bourgeois industrial civilization: independent writers, ecclesiastics or theologians (many Romantics are ministers' sons), poets and artists, academic mandarins, etc. What is the social basis for this hositility?

The traditional intelligentsia (we might recall the "Cénacle" in Balzac's *Illusions perdues*) inhabits a mental universe governed by *qualitative* values, by ethical, esthetic, religious, cultural or political values. All of their social activity of "spiritual production" (the term is used by Marx in *The German Ideology*) is inspired, motivated, oriented and molded by these values, which constitute their *raison d'être* as intellectuals. But the central characteristic of capitalism is that its functioning is entirely determined by *quantitative* values: exchange value, price, profit. There is a fundamental opposition, then, between these two worlds, an opposition that creates contradictions and conflicts.[92] Naturally, the intelligentsia of the old type cannot escape certain constraints of the market as industrial capitalism develops — the need to sell its "spiritual products," for example. A part of this social group ends up accepting the hegemony of exchange value, yielding internally (sometimes even with enthusiasm and fervor) to its demands. Others, remaining faithful to their pre-capitalist cultural universe of qualitative values, refuse what Balzac's Cénacle called "the decision to do business with one's soul, one's mind, one's thought"; these become the seed-bed for the production of the Romantic anti-capitalist worldview.

While the *creators* of the various figures of Romantic anti-capitalism, and the "carriers" of Romantic movements, issue from the "classic" intelligentsia as distinct from the modern type — scientists, technicians, engineers, economists, administrators, media personnel, etc. — the *audience* of the worldview, its *social base* in the full sense, is far more vast. It is potentially composed of all classes, fractions of classes or social categories for which the rise of industrial capitalism spells decline or creates a crisis in their economic, social or political status and/or negatively effects their way of life and the cultural values to which they are attached. For example, depending on circumstances and the historical period involved they can include groups like the aristocracy, landowners, the "old" urban and rural *petite bourgeoisie*, the

91. K. Mannheim, "Das konservative Denken" (1927), in *Wissenssoziologie* (Luchterhand, 1964), pp. 452-54.

92. On this subject see Lucien Goldmann, *Pour une sociologie du roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), pp. 31ff.

intelligentsia, the clergy, students, etc. What is involved, of course, is only an *objective possibility*, a probable behavior as Max Weber would say, the actual realization of which depends on a whole series of concrete socio-historical conditions.

In this sense, the analyses that designate the old ruling classes, or the aristocracy, or the pre-capitalist petty bourgeoisie as the social base of Romanticism, are not false but rather too limited; restricting themselves to a single class or fraction of a class, they are unable to account for the vast extension and complexity of the aggregate of social forces that identify themselves with this worldview at different historical moments.

Is it possible also to define the social bases specific to *each of the types* of Romantic anti-capitalism? Generally speaking, one might advance the hypothesis that the utopian-revolutionary forms draw their audience mainly from among non-dominant social strata; but any attempt at a more precise determination seems problematic — particularly since, as we have seen, a single individual frequently passes from one position to another within the Romantic spectrum.

The attempt at a sociological analysis that we have outlined here has, nonetheless, a limitation: it tends to reduce the audience of Romantic anti-capitalism — its *social public* — to certain archaic, pre-capitalist "pockets of resistance," groups that are tradition-bound or marginal to modern society. If this were true, the Romantic worldview would be a phenomenon in decline, one condemned to disappear by the very development of industrial civilization. But that is far from being the case. A significant part of contemporary cultural and literary production is deeply influenced by it, from Tolkien to Borges and from Agnon to Michael Ende. Even the movie industry increasingly includes Romantic and critical ingredients in its ideological make-up: *The Return of the Jedi* and *E.T.* are typical examples. Moreover, several of the most important recent social movements — ecology, feminism, pacifism, the theology of liberation — express feelings and aspirations strongly colored by Romantic anti-capitalism. Pacifism and ecology, which are partially convergent, are the most massive ones, and also the most heterogeneous. They include the most diverse forms of Romanticism, from conservative or restitutionist to the most radical revolutionary utopianism, and they refer to different kinds of pre-capitalist values: religious ethics, grassroots *Gemeinschaft*, natural equilibrium. Nuclear weapons and nuclear energy, the most advanced point of modern industrial *Zivilisation*, appear in their eyes to be the worst expression of a kind of technological progress that has grown out of control and threatens to destroy humankind.

On the whole these social movements tend towards the Left of the

political spectrum, but the issues they raise cut through the traditional party lines. The German SPD, for instance, is deeply divided between a modernist, rational/pragmatist and neo-liberal wing (Helmut Schmidt), and a moralist/Romantic one, religiously inspired, ready to support the pacifist and ecological campaigns (Erhard Eppler). Utopia, rather than regression, is their dominant note, although it is difficult to identify one particular kind of Romantic anti-capitalism as being the hegemonic tendency. Humanist socialism (of Christian inspiration) and neo-populism are probably among the best represented among the activists and rank and file to both pacifism and ecology, but it would be wrong to reduce the latter to this political dimension. In any case it is significant that they have achieved their greatest successes precisely in the (technologically) most advanced societies of *Spätkapitalismus,* like the USA and Western Germany. It would seem as if industrial capitalist civilization has reached a stage in its development where its destructive effects on the tissue of society and on the natural environment have attained such proportions that certain themes of Romantic anti-capitalism (and certain forms of nostalgia for a pre-capitalist past) exert a diffuse influence far beyond the classes and social categories traditionally associated with the worldview.