Enlightenment and Romanticism

UCM course HU 2005 (Fall 2017)

(Coordination Maarten Doorman)

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INTRODUCTION

1 Topic

The Enlightenment and Romanticism as two opposing cultural periods.

2 Objectives

To provide students with an historical and philosophical overview of these two cultural periods, using an interdisciplinary and topic-oriented approach, based on an opposition of the two above-mentioned periods.

Students should also gain insight in the relationship between social, literary, artistic and philosophical developments in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, and get an idea of the far-reaching influence that Romanticism and the Enlightenment, as well as the romantic criticism of the Enlightenment, have had on art, science, and political discussions even to this day.

3 Coordination

Prof. dr. Maarten Doorman, Fac. of Arts and Social Science, Department of Philosophy; doorman@maastrichtuniversity.nl

4 Timetable, Blackboard and Assessment

The **course period** runs from 4 September to 20 October 2017.

Mon 4 September

introductory lecture by Maarten Doorman preparation ass. 1

Thu 7 September

tutorial, discussion ass. 1, preparation ass. 2

Mon 11 September

tutorial, discussion ass. 2, preparation ass. 3

Thu 14 September

tutorial, discussion ass. 3, preparation ass. 4

Mon 18 September

tutorial, discussion ass. 4, preparation ass. 5

Thu 21 September

tutorial, discussion ass. 5, preparation ass. 6

Mon 25 September

tutorial, discussion ass. 6, preparation ass. 7

Thu 28 September

tutorial, discussion ass. 7, preparation ass. 8

Mon 2 October

film (Dangerous Liaisons)

take home test: test 1, 2 A4 (900-1000 words), to hand in on 9-10

Thu 5 October

tutorial, discussion ass. 8, preparation ass. 9

Mon 9 October

tutorial, discussion ass. 9, preparation ass. 10

Thu 12 October

tutorial, discussion ass. 10

Thu 19 October

test 2

Students have to check **Blackboard** (Eleum) at least every day before a meeting. Tests, messages and suggestions for the course will be published at regular basis. The second test may be a take home: this will be decided in the last week.

Assessment

There will be **two tests**; the first being a (take home) paper (2 A4 only) that reflects on a film (Stephen Frears, *Dangerous Liaisons*) and a final test with open questions at the end of the course on all the assignments. (test 1: test 2 = 25%: 75 %).

There will be an opportunity for inspection of the corrected tests within a maximum of thirty days after the final results have been published. Students can ask for this to the coordinator of the course by email.

Resit. If a student earns a 5.5 or higher for the assessment and meets his or her attendance requirement, he or she passes the course. A student who passes a course (grade \geq 5.5) will NOT be allowed to take a resit to improve his or her grade. In order to be eligible for a resit exam, a student must have a) met the attendance requirement of the course, or be allowed to make up for it by means of an additional assignment and b) made a fair attempt to fulfil all requirements of the assessment.

Additional assignments. To qualify for an additional assignment a student may not have missed more than 30% of the group meetings and must submit a completed request form 'additional assignment because of insufficient attendance' to the Office of Student Affairs, within 10 working days after completion of the course. In the meanwhile, such students will be given a provisional overall grade, but will not receive credits for the course until they have successfully completed an additional assignment. The nature and volume of the additional assignment will be proportional to the number of tutorial group meetings missed, and the assignment must be completed and submitted to the coordinator concerned by mail within 20 working days.

5 Literature

Students are required to study all literature referred to in the assignments. Most of these texts are available in the E-reader (see Eleum). They are marked. Some of them are not available there because they are part of a standard work that students must have seen, or because they contain illustrations or too many pages for legal reproduction. Those books can easily be found in the reading room and in the University Library. Hard copies of most texts can also be found in the two readers of this course in the reading room. Don't wait to the last day to read them or to make a copy.

A good book, providing general background for this course, is: N. Hampson, *The Enlightenment*. Students are expected to buy this reasonably priced book. Helpful as general background is Maurice Cranston, *The Romantic Movement*. It is strongly advised to read, at least, in Hampson the introduction and Chapter 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8; and in Cranston Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4. Other comprehensive books that may be relevant are: Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*; Charles Larmore, *The Romantic Legacy*.

A survey of the major philosophers from the Enlightenment and Romanticism is provided by Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*; the general historical background can be studied in Palmer and Colton, *A History of the Modern World*.

A helpful dictionary about the Enlightenment is: John W. Yolton (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1996 (1991). A good overview of different aspects of Romanticism is Duncan Wu, *A Companion to Romanticism*, Oxford 1999 (1998). These books, and some other relevant books, can be found in the Reading Room of UCM and in the University Library.

6 Introduction

Present-day Western civilisation is largely the result of a struggle between two intellectual movements. The first has its roots in the Enlightenment and confidently considers itself the heir of this movement; the second, although less confidently, is a continuation of the ideas of Romanticism. Both have fought for preference in the most widely divergent fields, and with different degrees of success, depending on the place and the time. Thus, the intellectual movement which is also referred to as 'Enlightenment Positivism' dominates the fields of science, law, and the organisation of social life.

Romanticism, however, has also exerted its influence here, in particular in life and social sciences. Such concepts as 'the unconscious', the 'social organism', or the method of 'Understanding' (German 'Verstehen') have a typically romantic origin. In the fields of literature and the arts, one could even speak of the primacy of the romantic attitude, taking into account that artistic movements such as constructivism are probably more in line with Enlightenment Positivism.

It is perhaps correct to observe that, considering the entire spectrum of social life, the Enlightenment tradition has been the most influential one. Romantic movements have often manifested themselves as 'counter cultures', to use a term which is reminiscent of the nineteen-sixties. The criticism of Western civilisation, expressed in many diverse ways, as preferring cool calculation to the spiritual aspects of man's existence, as having no other yardstick than an egotism that has become a matter of course, has its origin within the Western world itself.

It was with similar terms that early Romanticists expressed their aversion to what they considered as the cult of Ratio in whose suite Perfectibility and Selfishness are showing off. In *Palingenesien* (1798), Jean Paul (Johann Paul F. Richter, 1763-1825) takes materialism and the idea of perfectibility from the Enlightenment to task as follows: "Allow me to speculate about man's food and elevate him to the highest level of mechanization, so that, like a statue of a Catholic saint, he only has wooden arms and legs, glass eyes, and ivory ears, but also has a body like those statues. I imagine for a moment that he would then have a pot like Papin (the predecessor of the steam machine ed.) instead of a stomach, and would hydraulically process the wine he had drunk by means of waterworks. Life science would hardly be about life, but would be full of

artificial wheel mechanisms. (...) In addition, there would be no meaner I's than nice I's, conceived by materialists, equipped with brain fibres and the corresponding longitudinal and transverse vibrations. Indeed, it would be a superhuman, blissful state and the natura naturans ('productive nature') would have disappeared and only natura naturata ('produced nature') would have remained on earth, and the machine operators would themselves have become machines. If this were the case, I ask you, with what advantages would earth have been blessed..."

And before that, Rousseau (1712-1778) had already criticized the egotism of his society, legitimized as 'property': "The first person who thought of fencing in a piece of land and saying: 'This is mine', and who found persons simple enough to believe him, was the true founding father of the bourgeois society. What crimes, wars, and misery would have been spared us if someone had taken up the fence and had called: 'Listen not to this impostor, you will be lost if you forget that the fruit is there for everyone and the land belongs to no-one".

It would be wrong, however, to regard the romantic tradition purely as a continuous negative reaction to rationality and the empiricism of Enlightened reasoning. As we shall see, not only the Enlightenment, but also Romanticism can be regarded as an independent philosophy, as a more or less coherent system of values, ideals, and mental attitudes.

Historically, the Enlightenment must be located in the eighteenth century. Geographically, it first concerns France and Scotland. In France, famous spokesmen of 'the Age of Reason' (Enlightenment, or *Aufklärung* in German) include the jurist and political philosopher Montesquieu (1689-1755), the philosopher, writer, and historian Voltaire (1694-1778), the economist Quesnay (1694-1774), the mathematician d'Alembert (1717-1783), the writer, art critic and philosopher Denis Diderot (1713-1784) and the naturalist (biologist) Buffon (1707-1788). The Scottish Enlightenment is represented by scientists such as Hutcheson (1694-1747), David Hume (1711-1776), Adam Smith (1723-1790) and Ferguson (1723-1816).

In Germany, the 'Aufklärung' started with a slight delay. The author and playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) is one of the first in Germany who was inspired by the critical and anti-dogmatic spirit of the Enlightenment. The plays in which this is expressed, *Minna von Barnheim* (1767), *Emilia Galotti* (1772), and especially *Nathan der*

Weise (1779), all date from the second half of the eighteenth century. Also Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), author of Was ist Aufklärung? (What is Enlightenment? 1784) and one of the most important philosophers of the century, is a late-comer as "enlightened person" with respect to the developments abroad. Most of his relevant work appeared in the period 1780-1800. Nevertheless, as early as the middle of the eighteenth century one of the centres of the Enlightenment was in Germany, at the court of the Prussian king Frederick the Great. (See the first two assignments of this course.) We must add, however, that the Prussian court culture focused exclusively on France. French was the *lingua franca*.

It is clear that the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century constitutes no absolute abandonment of seventeenth-century ideas. Eras never emerge from nowhere and always have a previous history. Compared to the preceding period, however, the Enlightenment shows a clear shift. Ernst Cassirer succinctly described the difference between the philosophical attitudes of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century by distinguishing between the 'esprit de système', which we can find in Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, and Leibniz, and the 'esprit systematique' of the Enlightenment. In the seventeenth century, it was thought that the most important task of philosophy was to construct a 'system' of true statements which could be derived from a number of highest principles. During the eighteenth century, this form of knowing and explaining reality, which is based on purely logical deduction, is largely abandoned. This does not mean that we no longer encounter the concept of 'system'. Condillac, whose influential *Traité des systèmes* appears in 1749, at first sight defines 'system' in a fairly traditional manner: "[A system is] the placing of different components of learning or science within a structure in which these mutually support one another and where the last ones are explained by the first, which are their constituents." But these principles are no longer the unquestionable first truths comprehended by the intellect, but the basic principles and regularities of reality itself, which we can only know through experience. The emphasis shifts, so to speak, from the rationally comprehended to the sensorial perceived. In line with this, systematic empiricism and experimentation acquire a previously unknown status, in particular in those areas where mathematical formalization had never taken place before, such as in biology and medicine.

The single most important seventeenth century man responsible for this shift was undoubtedly Newton. Before Newton, the test of a theory did not come from the proof

that it could be derived from a few highest, speculative principles, but from the confirmation of the theory by sensory perception. It is true that Newton believed nature to be pervaded with order and regularity, and that, as Galilei said, 'the book of nature was written by God in mathematical symbols', but this must not be anticipated by pure conceptual formation. Measure and number must be derived from reality itself.

The fact that Newton was held in great reverence until late in the eighteenth century, is not only because of the *result* of his scientific explorations, the 'general law of gravity', but also because of the idea that Newton discovered the 'way by which'. The rules of scientific research, as formulated by Newton in opposition to Descartes, were always understood by Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Condillac as the discovery of the intellectual powers that enable man to face nature. Pope's ode speaks volumes: "Nature and Nature's Laws lay hid in the night: God said, 'Let Newton be!' and all was light". If we were looking for the official beginning of the Enlightenment, then this could be the year 1738, in which Voltaire published a book that would earn him his first fame - *Eléments de Philosophie de Newton*. Others, however, would place the beginning of the Enlightenment earlier; the Frenchman Paul Hazard, for example, puts it as early as the reign of Louis the Fourteenth (1643-1715).

The *Encyclopédie des arts et métiers* constituted an impressive monument for the Enlightenment. Its publication started in 1751 under the supervision of d'Alembert and Diderot and, together with Adam Smith's famous *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), it is one of the clearest expressions of the spirit of the Enlightenment. The onset of Romanticism in the eighteenth century is obviously less clearly marked. It forms a kind of undercurrent, which occasionally emerges in some authors, such as Rousseau, Diderot, Goethe, and Buffon, only to be replaced by patterns of thought which belong to the repertoire of the Enlightenment.

Nevertheless, the basis of the golden age of Romanticism (around 1800 in Germany and England) is most definitely in the eighteenth century. Important breeding-grounds were literature and, especially in Germany, an emotional theology emerging around 1700: Pietism. Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788) is a typical example of someone in whom religious mysticism and literature (poetry) are closely interrelated. In language, in particular in the lyrical exaltation evoked by words, we discern divine revelation, he believes, and he would not have been surprised if Adam and Eve had communicated in

verse: "Poetry is the mother tongue of mankind". Whatever we may think of the oracular language of this 'Magician of the North', with his grim struggle against the rationalism of the Enlightenment and his plea for emotions and intuition, he was an inspiration for the literary movement which later became known as "Sturm und Drang", after the title of a play by Klinger.

The Sturm und Drang movement lasted about fifteen years, roughly from 1770 to 1785. This is also the period in which a major exponent of the emerging Romanticism, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) is beginning to influence the German intelligentsia. In his Essay on the Origin of Language (1772), Herder had described language as the slowly maturing product of the cultural-historical development of a people. This interest in the history of the vernacular, popular culture and religions (including non-Western) and the rising nationalism are notable characteristics of Romanticism. Whereas the historical interest of the Enlightenment was largely restricted to primitive cultures to which contemporary society could compare itself, we sense in the romantic approach a serious interest in the unique nature of foreign and early cultures. The 'discovery' of the Upanishads in a translation from Persian made by Anquetil du Perron and subsequent studies of Eastern 'wisdom' opened up new areas of religious insight. A similar predilection for the far and strange also underlies the interest in the Middle Ages and even more distant pasts, such as the ancient Germanic and Celtic times. Thus, Herder began to collect and publish folk songs and ballads, which in turn served as an inspiration for the authors and poets who had formed the 'Göttinger Dichterbund' in 1772.

During the same period, a 'Celtic epic', the *Ossian*, is beginning to extend its popularity from England to various other countries. Its author, Macpherson, presented this poem to the public as a historically original (a typically romantic epithet!) epic, which he had discovered in 1762. Almost at the same time, the Anglican bishop Thomas Percy published a collection of old English and Scottish ballads and songs, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), which relate a glorious English past. Like the "Ossian", the "Reliques" prove that early-romantic developments were not restricted to Germany. The emerging ideology of emotional life, heralded by German Pietism, thus had its literary pendant in the sentimental epistolary novels published in England. Famous examples of sentimentalism are *Pamela*, *or virtue rewarded* (1740) and *Clarissa Harlowe* (1754), by Richardson. This literary exploitation of the heart, which was to be explored to its darkest

depths, counts amongst its followers in France such authors as Rousseau (*Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, 1762), in Germany Goethe, in particular in *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774).

The above shows that it is not possible to give a strict chronological and geographical definition of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Questions concerning the origin and elapsing of these cultural periods and attempts to identify different sides continue to produce different answers.

We can nevertheless identify the first high point of Romanticism around 1800, in particular in Germany and England. It was only when Napoleon's freedom was restricted to Elba that with the subsequent lifting of censorship Romanticism also starts to gain ground in Italy and France. But the intensity and depth of the German and English Romanticism was never matched in France, the Netherlands and Italy.

The apparent coincidence of this first high point of Romanticism and the French Revolution also indicates that this revolution - regarded by many as a culmination of enlightened ideas - contained romantic elements.

In all, on closer inspection, Romanticism appears to be more than a fondant-pink bubble bath of 'feelings'. In its essence, it is a highly multifaceted approach to reality and man's place in reality; and perhaps even more so than during the Enlightenment, it is a world view in its own right with a surprising coherence. During this course, we will use not only a historical approach but also three systematic lines of approach to compare the worldviews of the Enlightenment and Romanticism and thus to enunciate them. These are:

- a) Nature
- b) Man by himself
- c) Man and others.

a. Nature

During the eighteenth century, there was a sharp increase of production and the use of measuring instruments and observation equipment. This was accompanied by an approach of reality which is called 'analytical'. We define the 'analytical method' as dividing

empirical phenomena into their most elementary components, in order to gain knowledge of nature. Although the Enlightenment adopts this method in principle from the great sixteenth and seventeenth century thinkers, as far as the isolated elements are concerned it displays a type of materialism which, in its soberness, is quite unrelated to the metaphysical speculation of seventeenth century rationalism. There is optimism because of the belief that nature thus observed can increasingly be subjected to human demands and needs.

Romanticism, on the other hand, emphasizes coherence. Only as components of a totality, as a functional moment of the whole, the constituent parts obtain their true meaning. In a letter to the biologist Von Humboldt, Goethe comments on the analytical, reductionist reasoning of the eighteenth century scientists as follows: "Your observations are based on the Element, mine on the Gestalt".

This fascination for the 'Gestalt', this preference of the whole over its parts is expressed in the central position given to the concept of organism and the corresponding metaphors, such as 'the root of a language', 'the flourishing of a civilization', 'blossoming youth', et cetera. Instead of a *mechanistic* view of nature, Romanticism starts from an *organic* view of nature. The dead reality of eighteenth century materialism is transformed by the romanticist into an animate nature of which man is part, rather than its adversary. 'Nature' is no longer regarded in its physical-material sense, but as a comprehensive spiritual order. We do not observe the internal coherence, which manifests itself in all phenomena, 'empirically' by means of our senses. Nature is a symbolic reality and, like art, we can only penetrate it if we learn to read the signs.

This reappraisal of nature, not devoid of religious elements, is accompanied by a recognition of emotion and intuition as direct tools of knowledge. These tools are not given to man in their final state, but must be developed by submission to and unification with nature. But not only the immersion in the exaltation of nature sharpens the mind's eye; it is also, and perhaps pre-eminently so, art which unveils the essence of the world. Looking glass, lancet and ruler are being discarded (Assignments 3, 4, and 5).

b. Man by himself

The materialist approach to nature, which is characteristic of the Enlightenment, is also expressed in the view of man. An external expression of this can be found in the physician/philosopher Lamettrie, who regards man as an ingenious machine ('L'homme machine'). He also describes thinking and feeling in terms the functions of various components of a piece of machinery. But for most Enlightenment philosophers, such an extreme type of materialism is unacceptable. It is true that the famous Condillac, for example, attempts to study the systematic character of man's mental powers, but he does so without reducing these to the mechanical functions of the physical-mechanical components of the human body (cf. Assignment 6). Most philosophers of the Enlightenment, however, do support a view of man in which sensory perception plays a primary role. Thus, they follow in the footsteps of the English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704). According to Locke, the human mind starts as a blank page; all knowledge is the result of sensory perception, not of innate principles and ideas, as proclaimed by the school of Descartes. The Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) reacted by wondering whether a human being was anything more than a collection of observations.

This downright prosaic view of man's spiritual life is abhorred by romanticists. The latter discern something much more impressive behind the facade of the rational, analytical mind: a waxworks of melancholy moods, indefinable emotions, dreams, nightmares, desires, phantasms, passions, sadness and madness. The mysterious inner man is clearly presented here as an integral part of human nature.

The unfathomable ocean of the unconscious is not only terrifying and dangerous, but also holds unexpected treasures. If one manages to let the unconscious express itself, one will gain access to a deeper kind of knowledge. Where the mind confronts man with nature (including his own nature!), the unconscious is the cord that links him with the 'world soul', with the oneness of the Universe.

But how can we enter the cave of our soul as long as the waking ratio blocks the entrance? How can we outwit this guard? Romanticism suggests a number of ways. Fuddling and intoxication, induced either by means of hallucinogens (coffee, raw, tainted meat, mushrooms, hashish, opiates, et cetera), or by hypnosis; indulging in dreams;

intensifying desires and passions, ending in madness; cultivating intuitions and emotions as the 'voice of one's inner self', and more than anything else by means of art.

The true artist is able to bring out this inner reality in his poetry, paintings, and music. The creative work of the artist is literally self-expression. But in this extreme subjectivity, the tip of the veil of the world's enigma is lifted only briefly. The perfect work of art is a window which provides the susceptible listener or viewer with a view of the inner self of its creator and thus on the nature of the world (cf. Assignment 7).

c. Man and others

Immanuel Kant's answer to the question "What is the Enlightenment?" ("Was ist Aufklärung?", the title of the above-mentioned pamphlet from 1784) was: "Enlightenment is man's escape from his self-imposed infancy". A clever summary of the political-philosophical program of the Enlightenment, which identified social progress with the (informed) independence of individual citizens. Independence implies freedom of acquisition of knowledge and of forming an opinion for *all* citizens, and a public debate as the forum within which all this takes shape. By adopting these ideals of liberty and equality, the prophets of the Enlightenment turn against feudal society with its class-related privileges (cf. Assignment 1) and more in general against patronizing of the individual. After all, everyone is the best judge of what is in his own interest and what is not. According to the philosophers of the Enlightenment, man by nature always acts out of self-interest ('amour propre'). Society must therefore be organized in such a way as to provide all opportunities for promoting self-interest. This can only be done to the extent that it does not conflict with the self-interest of others, and therefore a number of constraints must be imposed. Or as Alexander Pope wrote:

Two principles in human nature reign;

Self-love, to urge, and Reason to restrain.

Reason makes us social beings, capable of living with one another. In order to safeguard the interests of all and guarantee both individual freedom and equality, there must be a power that transcends the individual being. In the view of the philosophers, this can be justified on the basis of the idea of the 'social contract' (*Contrat Social*).

Contrary to this business-like view of human society, the dominant view in Romanticism was an organic model. Herder had already drawn the parallel between the history of mankind and biological development. Just like all organisms, peoples have a specific history, with its creation, its root, and specific flourishing periods. This organic view of human society has two sides.

Firstly, the emphasis on originality, unity and independence leads to the idea that each people must be completely free to develop itself. The inherent appraisal of nationalistic tendencies expresses itself on the one hand in the above-mentioned interest in one's own cultural heritage and the search for its origin in traditional folk ballads and myths. On the other hand, this appraisal manifests itself in the sympathy for the struggle for freedom of suppressed peoples. Thus, Lord Byron exchanged the battlefield of love for the freedom struggle of the Greeks against the Turks, only to die there as befits a young Romantic: young.

The other side of the organic view of human society concerns the internal structure of societies. Just like in living organisms, where the various organs are subordinate to the whole and cannot exist in isolation, individuals, groups, and social classes constitute the functional components of the social unity. An early definition of this organic view of society can be found in the German idealist philosopher Fichte: "In an organic body, each component constantly maintains the whole and, because it does so, is in turn itself maintained; in a similar way, citizens also maintain the state ... each citizen only maintains himself in a status which is determined by the whole; thus he is maintained by that which he himself maintains, and therefore turns to itself and maintains itself". This socio-philosophical view has in practice sometimes evolved into the political ideology of corporatism, which considers the state almost literally as a body (corpus) and which preaches the harmonious, peaceful co-operation between the social layers and classes. This basically conservative political philosophy distinguishes itself from an equally romantic view, which regards the state instead as a repressive 'mechanism', which frustrates the tendency towards 'organisation', naturally present in each people. Romanticism is therefore also the breeding-ground for nineteenth-century anarchism.

The typically romantic way of thinking in terms of complementarity and mutual dependence returns at the level of personal relationships between individuals. On the one hand, each person is unique and irreplaceable, on the other hand he is 'unfinished' and incapable of developing without others. The 'Ich' (I) cannot exist without the 'Du' (you): "I open my eyes and my ears, or reach out my hand, and I feel at the same time inseparable: You and I, I and You", writes Jacobi (1743-1819) in a letter.

This discovery of the I-self in the other not only constitutes the basis for the exalted idea of friendship during the Romantic period, but also forms the basis of a new view of the relationship between men and woman, in which love and sexuality gain a hitherto unknown dimension. For Schlegel (1772-1829) and Schleiermacher (1768-1834) the traditional marriage of convenience, entered into on the basis of economic considerations and for reasons of reproduction is finished: "There a man loves in a woman only the species, a woman in a man only the degree to which he possesses natural qualities and leads his bourgeois life, and both love in their children only their product and property...". This is offset by Schlegel against true romantic love: true love is romantic 'confusion', that is 'spiritualization of lust' and 'sensualisation of the soul' (cf. Assignment 8). However, the lofty ideals concerning inter-human relationships and the relationship between men and women, cherished during the Romantic period, are at odds with the inevitable here and now, with the demands of everyday reality. Where reality hinders the desire for unification with the Other and with nature, it confronts the individual even more with his own imperfection. Within this area of tension of 'Sehnsucht' and 'Weltschmerz', the Romanticists situate the human soul, which is now starting to manifest unsuspected depths.

ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM

If we are asked, "Do we now live in an *enlightened age*?" the answer is, "No", but we do live in an *age of enlightenment*. As things now stand, much is lacking which prevents men from being, or from easily becoming, capable of correctly using their own reason in religious matters with assurance and free from outside direction. But, on the other hand, we have clear indications that the field has now been opened wherein men may freely deal with these things and that the obstacles to general enlightenment or the release from self-imposed tutelage are gradually being reduced. In this respect, this is the age of enlightenment, or the century of Frederick. [...]

But only one who is himself enlightened is not afraid of shadows, and who has a numerous and well-disciplined army to assure public peace, can say: "argue as much as you will, and about what you will, only obey!" A republic could not dare say such a thing. Here is shown a strange and unexpected trend in human affairs in which almost everything, looked at in the large, is paradoxical.

(Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* in Beck (ed.), Immanuel Kant on History, p. 8-10.)

About enlightened absolutism, its definition, its theoretical principles and its practical content, there is a comprehensive scientific literature, which is characterized by its controversial nature. It is clear that the concept was unknown in the 18th century and is only the result of 19th-century attempts at scientific systematization. But has it any historical realism? Is it not a combination of two fundamentally incompatible phenomena? (...) Only in one aspect is there almost amazing agreement: Frederick the Great is generally regarded as an almost classical exponent of this type of government.

(Th. Schieder, Friedrich der Große, p. 284)

September 1736

You flatter me too much; but the love for my fellow man, which I have always held in my heart, and which - I daresay has determined my character - gives me thousand times more pleasure to find a sovereign who thinks as a human being, a philosopher-king who will make mankind happy [...]. Truly good monarchs are only those who, like you, first learn to know their fellow men, to love the truth, and to abhor persecution and superstition. A monarch who adheres to this idea can lead his country into a Golden Age. Why is it that so few monarchs seek such glory? It is because almost all of them think more of their monarchy than of their people; in you this is the opposite [...].

I consider myself very fortunate in being able to visit you and honour Your Royal Highness. People visit Rome to see the churches and paintings, the ruins and reliefs. A monarch like you, however, is a more worthy destiny of one's travels, because such a ruler is an even rarer and more admirable sight. Unfortunately the bonds of friendship which tie me to my refuge prevent me from leaving. You will certainly agree with Julian, that great and abused personality, who stated that one should always give preference to one's friends

over the monarchs [...]. But my heart will always be with you, your fame will always be dear to me. I hope that you shall always remain as you are now and that other monarchs will follow your example.

(Letter from Voltaire to Frederick the Great. Quote from O. Bardung, *Friedrich der Groβe*, p. 63. Note: original text is in French)

Now for a little about the completest tyrant that God ever sent for a scourge to an offending people. I had rather be a post horse with Sir J. Hind-Cotton on my back than his First Minister, his brother or his wife. He has abolished all distinctions. There is nothing here but an absolute Prince and a People all equally miserable, all equally trembling before him and all equally detesting his iron government.

(The English envoy Hanbury William on Frederick the Great; N. Mitford, *Frederick the Great*, p. 167)

Joseph wrote his mother with the appropriate amount of restraint, but with a mixture of suspicion and admiration: 'He's a genius and a marvelous speaker, but everything he says smells of the sneak.' A genius that does not hide the character of a villain - for Maria Theresa, this was a message that was in accordance with her innermost feelings.

(The Austrian enlightened despot Joseph II, describing Frederick the Great, quoted in: Th. Schieder, *Friedrich der Groβe*, p. 402. Original text in German and French.)

Readings

I. Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* In: L.W. Beck (ed.), *Immanuel Kant on History*. New York 1963, pp. 3-10. (E-reader)

N. Mitford, Frederick the Great. London 1970, pp. 171-185. (E-reader)

R.R. Palmer, J. Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, New York (many editions), section 35 (*The Philosophes - and Others*) and section 36: *Enlightened Despotism: France, Austria, Prussia* (ca. 20 pages; n.b. in some editions s. 35-6; in others 35-37). (Book in reading room)

E.N. Williams, *The Ancien Régime in Europe. Government and Society in the Major States 1648-1789*. Harmondsworth 1970, pp. 460-471. (E-reader)

THE DIFFUSION OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The social diffusion of the ideas of the Enlightenment was controlled in the first instance by the high cost of books which greatly restricted possible readers [...] The question with which we are concerned, however, is not merely who could afford to pay several pounds for a banned pamphlet or fifteen shillings for an authorized book, but who would think it worth his while to do so.

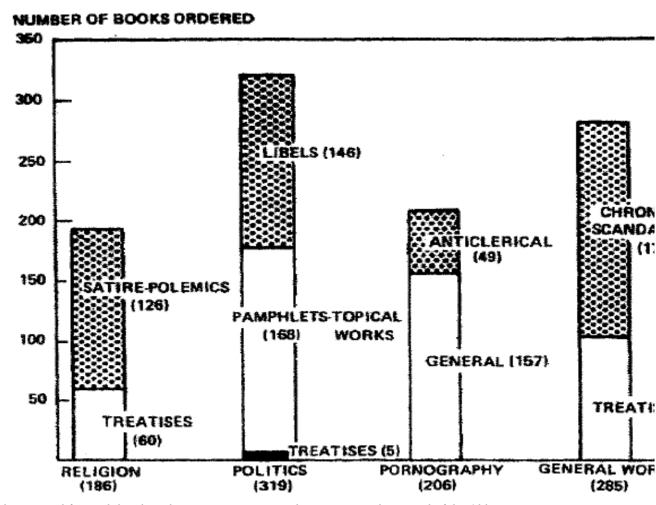
(N. Hampson, *The Enlightenment*, Harmondsworth 1990, pp. 132-33)

Letter from a bookseller in Poitiers to his supplier in Switzerland:

Here is a short list of philosophical books that I want. Please send the invoice in advance: Venus in the Cloister, or the Nun in a Nightgown; Christianity unveiled; Memoires of Mme la marquise de Pompadour; Inquiry on the Origin of Oriental Despotism; The System of Nature; Theresa the Philosopher; Margot the Campfollower.

(R. Darnton, The Literary Underground of the Old Regime)

From this letter it becomes clear what those, who had professional knowledge of what the French wished to read, meant by 'philosophical'.



The Demand for Prohibited Books. From: R. Darnton, The Literary Underground of the Old Regime

Readings

- R. Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*. London 1982, pp. 1-40. (Book in reading room)
- N. Hampson, *The Enlightenment*. Harmondsworth 1990, pp. 128-146.
- D. Outram, *The Enlightenment*. Cambridge, Mass. 2005, pp. 11-27 (E-reader) or idem 1995, pp. 14-30 (Reading Room).

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE RAINBOW

During the 1660s, Newton began experimenting with light, the results of which would ultimately be laid down in the *Opticks* (1704), for a long time the standard work on light in natural science. One of his experiments was carried out in a 'camera obscura', a completely darkened chamber into which a single ray of light could penetrate through a small hole in the blinds. This ray of light struck a glass prism, with the result with which we are familiar: the spectrum of colors we also know from the rainbow. From this, Newton concluded that 'white' light consists of the elementary colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet), dispersed by the medium.

Goethe, who was not only a classicist playwright, but also an unmistakably romantic scientist; wrote:

Since it is not possible in either knowledge or reflection to construct a whole, we must necessarily think of science as an art if we expect any kind of wholeness from it ... none of the human faculties should therefore be excluded from scientific activity. The dark depths of prescience, a sure intuition of the present, mathematical profundity, physical accuracy, the heights of reason, an acute understanding, a versatile and ardent imagination, a loving delight in the world of the senses – they are all essential for a lively and productive apprehension of the moment.

Goethe opposed Newton's theory of color with a great deal of force. He concentrated on the subjective perception of colors. In his *Theory of Color*, Goethe observed:

How such persistency were possible, will slowly become clear to our readers. Newton has used an artful way to give his work such a strict appearance that experts of form admired it, while laymen were amazed. To this he added the respectable pretense of a mathematical approach, with which he attempted to elevate the whole. [...]

I have no objection to those who believe they practically feel color; its very character is thus activated even more.

It can also be tasted. Blue tastes alkali, yellow-red tastes sour.

All manifestations of the soul are akin.

Those who compose the basic clear light from colored lights, are actually obscurants.

A misrepresentation, that one could dispose of and explain away a phenomenon by calculation or words.

(Goethe, Farbenlehre III, ed. by R. Steiner, p. 16 ff.; p. 264 ff.).

Several English poets also opposed Newton, albeit for different reasons. In "To the Rainbow" (1820), Thomas Campbell wrote for example:

When Science from Creation's face Enchantment's veil withdraws, What lovely visions yield their place To cold material laws!

Readings

M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, Oxford 1971, pp. 303-320. (E-reader)

F. Burwick, *The Damnation of Newton: Goethe's Color Theory and Romantic Perception*, Berlin/New York 1986, pp. 9-25. (E-reader). N.B. a translation of the German quotes can be found in the E-reader.

Charles C. Gillispie, *Science and the Literary Imagination: Voltaire and Goethe*. In: D. Daiches, A. Thorlby (eds.), *The Modern World*, Vol. I (*Hopes*), London 1975, pp. 179-189. (E-reader)

William Wordsworth, 'The Tables Turned.' From: Lyrical Ballads, London 1798.

TWO VISIONS ON NATURE

The power of man over the animals is a legitimate one, which no revolution can destroy, it's the power of the spirit over matter.

(Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle*, p. 565).

That is why each organization also has a symbolic aspect, each plant is, as it were, an intertwined aspect of the soul. Because our mind has the perpetual drive to organize itself, the world outside must also manifest a tendency for organization ...

(Schelling in an article about his philosophy of nature).

The extension, hardness, impenetrability, mobility, and inertia of the whole, result from the extension, hardness, impenetrability, mobility, and inertia of the parts; and hence we conclude the least particles of all bodies to be also all extended, and hard and impenetrable, and movable, and endowed with their proper inertia. And this is the foundation of all philosophy. Moreover, that the divided but contiguous particles of bodies may be separated from one another, is matter of observation: and, in the particles that remain undivided, our minds are able to distinguish yet lesser parts, as is mathematically demonstrated. (Newton, *Principia Mathematica*, Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy III).

Nature has her proper interest; & he will know what it is, who believes & feels, that every Thing has a Life of its own, & that we are all *one Life*. A Poet's *Heart & Intellect* should be *combined*, *intimately* combined & *unified* with the great appearances in Nature - & not merely held in solution & loose mixture with them, in the shape of formal Similes.

(Coleridge in a letter to Sotheby, September 1802).

Nature always moves slowly and, so to speak, with caution: its actions are never violent; even in its production it wishes to be moderate; it only moves with rules and measure ... (Montesquieu, *Lettres Persanes* CXIV).

But I know two wonderful languages ...: Art and Nature. ... Art is a completely different language from nature, but the latter also has a miraculous power over the heart of man, exerted by dark and mysterious ways. It speaks by means of images of man and also uses a kind of hieroglyphic script ... It merges the spiritual and supersensory in such a moving and admirable way in the visible form that again our entire soul and all aspects of our being are fundamentally moved and shaken.

(Wackenroder, from Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders, 1797).

Readings

Lilian R. Furst, *Romanticism in Perspective*, New York 1969, pp. 83-96. (E-reader)

Norman Hampson, The Enlightenment. Harmondsworth 1990, pp. 73-96.

Th.L. Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment*, Cambridge 1985, pp. 20-22; pp. 46-50. (E-reader)

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(1966). Das Ideengut der deutschen Romantik. Tübingen, Kap. 2. English translation of the second chapter (E-reader).

Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, Cambridge 2005, pp. 101-108. Outram 1995, pp. 55-62 (Reading Room).

Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life. Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe*, Chicago / London 2002, pp. 134-139, 145-146. (E-reader)

VON RAMDOHR VERSUS ROMANTICISM

Caspar David Friedrich, at the time a not very well-known painter, exhibited a newly finished painting in his own house around Christmas 1808. The painting represented a crucifix on top of a mountain, rising high above a solitary wooded landscape (see next page). It had been commissioned for the wife of count Franz Anton Thun-Hohenstein, and was to be placed on the altar in the chapel of their castle Tetschen, in the vicinity of Dresden.

F.W.B. von Ramdohr, one of those who visited Friedrich's house, launched a vehement attack against this new artwork in the "Zeitung für die elegante Welt" (the Newspaper for the elegant world). Von Ramdohr reproaches Friedrich that his strive for "eine edle Simplicität" (a noble simplicity) has ended in "übel verstandene Sparsamkeit" (a badly understood meagreness); he has renounced all the painterly artifices that make a landscape attractive. Instead of all this, the painting evokes feelings and religious sentiment. That is not what a landscape painting is meant to do!

It is presumptuous "wenn die Landschaftsmalerei sich in die Kirchen schleichen und auf Altare kriechen will" (when the landscape painting wants to creep into the churches and on top of the altars). Von Ramdohr's view of the landscape painting is close to neo-classicist principles. He strictly disapproves of the mysticism of Friedrich,

... jener Mystizismus, der jetzt überall sich einschleicht und aus Kunst wie aus Wissenschaft, aus Philosophie wie aus Religion gleich einem narkotischen Dunste uns entgegenwittert! Jener Mystizismus, der Symbole, Phantasien für malerische und poetische Bilder ausgibt und das klassische Altertum mit gotischem Schnitzwerk, steifer Kleinmeisterei und mit Legenden vertauschen möchte! Jener Mystizismus, der (...) überall nur ahnen will wo er entweder wissen oder erkennen möchte oder bescheiden schweigen müßte.

... this mysticism that pervades everything and that comes out of art, science, philosophy and religion like a narcotic mist that revolts us. This mysticism that trades symbols and fantasies for picturesque and poetic visions and that wishes to exchange the classical antiquity for gothic carvings, the rigidity of minor masters, and legends. This mysticism, that (...) wants only to suggest where it should either know or see or else modestly remain silent.



Readings

N.B. Please find ALL illustrations mentioned in the following texts on the internet. Watching them belongs to the assignment!

- H. Honour, *Neo-Classicism*, Harmondsworth 1991, pp. 17-37 (E-reader; for the illustrations use internet)
- H. Honour, *Romanticism*, Harmondsworth 1991, pp. 21-42 (E-reader; for the illustrations use internet)
- H.W. Janson (ed. by P. Davies a.o.) *History of Art. The Western Tradition*, Upper Saddle River (NJ) 2007, pp. 789-794, 805-810, 814-836, 842-850, 859. (Reading room).

THE SOUL ON THE RACK OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Within the Christian tradition, the soul or spirit always constituted the essence of man, his true self. On the basis of his rational powers, man - the mirror image of God - distinguished himself from the animals. The immortality of the soul also guaranteed that on Judgment Day, man would not escape the fate he deserved. By introducing the concept of 'res cogitans' (thinking substance, as opposed to 'res extensa', i.e. substance in the material sense), Descartes had accommodated this Christian dogma. By regarding man as an inspired automaton, he preserved the superior position of man over the animals; in addition, the 'res cogitans', in as far as it was considered as a substance, could be reconciled with the immortality of the soul. So man was not just an animal, nor a machine.

Then came Locke (1632-1704), who, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), presented a theory according to which *all* contents of the mind have their origin in sensory perception. And it is this view which was to become the starting point for a number of those damnable 'philosophes' in their deliberations concerning the human spirit. Diderot writes:

At birth, each man has neither knowledge, nor thoughts or ideas without sensory perception, we would have no knowledge of God, nor of good and evil; in one word, there is not a single innate principle, neither of a speculative, nor of a moral-practical nature.

And in another text:

There is only a single activity which functions within man, and that is (sensory) feeling (*sentir*). This activity is expressed as thought, as reasoning, as consideration, as wish and abhorrence. (...) And where does consciousness come from? From the senses and memory.

Or take Voltaire:

What is our first perception? That of pain; then follows the pleasure derived from food. That is all of life: pain and pleasure.

Eventually the provoking Lamettrie writes in *Man a Machine* (1748):

Let us than conclude boldly that man is a machine.



The digesting duck, made by the famous instrument builder Jacques de Vaucanson (1709-1782)

Readings

- L. G. Crocker, *An Age of Crisis. Man and World in Eighteenth Century French Thought*, Baltimore/London 1970, pp. 256-273. (E-reader)
- D.J. Murray, *A History of Western Psychology*, Englewood Cliffs N.J. 1983, pp. 98-103. (E-reader)
- J. A. Perkins, *The Concept of the Self in the French Enlightenment*, Geneva 1969, pp. 69-74. (E-reader)

Julien Offray de Lamettrie, *Man a Machine* (orig. *L'Homme Machine*, 1748), see https://archive.org/stream/manmachine00lame#page/148/mode/2up, pp. 85-95, 145-149.

THE ROMANTIC SOUL

In Assignment 6, you have been introduced to the "self", the human soul, "man himself", in the view of the Enlightenment. During the Romantic period, a remarkable change took place. Take the opening sentences of the influential *Psyche, zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Seele (Psyche, about the origins of the Soul)* by the German physician (but also painter and philosopher) Carus (1789-1869):

The key to knowledge about the nature of the conscious life of the soul lies in the realm of the unconscious. This explains the difficulty, even impossibility, of obtaining a true understanding of the secrets of the soul. If it were an absolute impossibility to find the unconscious in the conscious, then man should despair of ever acquiring knowledge of his soul, which is knowledge of himself. But if this impossibility is only an apparent one, then the first task of psychology is to determine how the human psyche is capable of descending into this depth.

Another German physician, W. Griesinger, wrote in 1843:

Often we observe at such moments in hallucinating patients that the ideas which were suppressed during waking hours, come strongly to the fore in dreams. For the individual whose balance has been disturbed by physical and mental confusion, the dream achieves what reality had denied.

This changing anthropological viewpoint is equally apparent in the English and German poetry around 1800. Two quotations:

I had a world about me; 'twas my own, I made it; for it only liv'd to me, And to the God who look'd into my mind -

from Wordworth's poem *The Prelude* from 1805. And Tieck wrote in *William Lovell* (1795):

But everything that I think I see outside me, can only exist within me.

Readings

David B. Brown, *Romanticism*, London / New York 2006, pp.309-317, 320-321, 325. (Ereader)

Lilian R. Furst, Romanticism in Perspective, New York 1970, pp. 55-69. (Reading room)

J.L. Talmon, *Romanticism and Revolt. Europe 1815-1848*, London 1967, pp. 136-150. (Book in reading room, also E-reader).

INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Moral development cannot take place in isolation, but, like love, not only presupposes unification, but both include the absolute need for togetherness, in its totality.

(Fr. Schlegel, Kölner Vorlesungen II).

We cannot reasonably expect human attachment to stretch beyond the advantage it offers to man. One must not complain that the degree of usefulness is always the criterion here, because there simply cannot be another yardstick. The attachment of the dog to the master who feeds him is a faithful image of the mutual bond between *men*.

(From the entry "Homme" in the Encyclopédie).

Sociability is the disposition which makes us do all the good to people as far as it is dependent on us and to tune our own happiness to the happiness of others, & to always make our own interest subordinate to the communal, general interest ... The idea of *sociability* is necessarily a universal one.

(From the entry "Sociabilité" in the *Encyclopédie*)

I open my eyes and my ears, or reach out my hand, and I feel at the same time inseparably: You and I, I and You.

(F.H. Jacobi in a letter)

Every human being must at least be in the position to have relationships with others; he must have one or more persons to whom he can communicate the essence of his being, his emotions and his impulses, and perhaps there should not be anything in him which he has not yet communicated to anyone. (...) More than anything else, it is not good for man to be alone.

(Schleiermacher in a letter to his sister, 1799)

The need to safeguard our own body against pain and destruction makes us investigate objects outside ourselves to determine whether these could be of use or harmful, in order to take to some of them and avoid others. But as soon as we start investigating the things around us, we discover among them a great many entities which seem to us to appear entirely like ourselves, that is to say, the appearance of which corresponds to ours, and which, as far as we can determine at first sight, have the same perceptions as we do. All this naturally makes us think that they have the same needs that we have and therefore the same interest in satisfying them. From this results the insight that it would be a great advantage if we were to join them in order to achieve in nature those things which could offer us protection and food.

(D'Alembert: 'Discours préliminaire' in the Encyclopédie)

Readings

- F.C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism. The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790-1800.* Cambridge (Mass.) 1992, pp. 222-235 (E-reader)
- L. G. Crocker, *An Age of Crisis. Man and World in Eighteenth Century French Thought*, Baltimore/London 1970, pp. 273-278. (E-reader)
- N. Hampson, *The Enlightenment*. Harmondsworth 1990, p.113-127.
- P. Hazard, *European thought in the Eighteenth century*, London 1954, pp. 160-171. (Ereader)
- J. A. Perkins, *The Concept of the Self in the French Enlightenment*, Geneva 1969, pp. 75-83. (E-reader)
- H.G. Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, Oxford 1979, pp.151-162. (E-reader)

LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY?

Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity is the famous slogan of the French Revolution. These three impressive concepts appear to be the apotheosis of a century of enlightened thought.

But take a look at the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (originally in French, 1789) and compare this to what Robespierre said in February 1794, during the Reign of Terror, about liberty and equality, and to Rousseau's remarks about fraternity.

The Revolutionaries tried to combine such enlightened ideals as liberty, equality, and fraternity. For some these ideals were much related, to others absolutely not the same.



THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND OF THE CITIZEN

ARTICLE I.

All men are born free and equal in rights and these natural rights cannot be taken from them.

ARTICLE II.

These rights are the rights of equality, liberty, the inviolability of the person, private property and resistance to oppression. (Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (originally in French), 1789)

If it is to be more than an empty shell, the social contract contains the implicit duty which by itself can make the other imperative: that all those who refuse to obey the general will, must be forced to do so by the entire body. This means no less than that he will be forced to be free.

(From: J.J. Rousseau, The Social Contract)

If the powers of the people's government in peacetime rest in virtue, then the powers of the people's government during a revolution rest both in virtue and in terror: the virtue, without which terror is lethal; the terror, without which virtue is powerless. Terror is nothing but ready, strict, unbending justice; it is as such derived from virtue; it is not so much a distinct principle but a conclusion from the general principle of democracy, applied to the most dire needs of the country. The revolutionary government is the despotism of freedom against tyranny.

(Robespierre, February 1794)

Readings

- N. Hampson, *The Enlightenment*, Harmondsworth 1990, pp. 207-217, 251-263.
- R. R. Palmer, J. Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, New York (several editions), Chapter IX, The French Revolution:
 - 42: The Revolution and the Reorganization of France;
 - 43: The Revolution and Europe: The War and the "Second" Revolution, 1792;
 - 44: The Emergency republic, 1792-1795: The Terror.
 - (ca. 25 pages; book in the reading room)
- G.H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*. Hinsdale, Illinois 1973, pp. 539-545. (Ereader)

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Nationalism has returned to the United States and to Europe - at least in the eyes of those who thought at the end of the twentieth century that nationalism had ceased to exist in the western part of the world. Generally speaking, this return is a matter of concern. After all, since the first part of the last century, nationalism has had an unfavorable connotation. Was not nationalism partly responsible for two World Wars, a number of smaller but hardly less violent conflicts, like that in the former Yugoslavia and Ukraine, and for an attitude of intolerance to all and everything foreign to what is regarded as one's own people and culture? Nationalist sentiments often evoke powerful emotions, incapable of being controlled by reason; they are often related to xenophobia.

At first sight, there seem to be few positive elements in nationalism. World citizens, cosmopolitans and other internationally oriented individuals have a much more positive reputation now than romantic nationalism.

Readings

- E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford 1983, pp. 1-7, 53-58, 137-141. (E-reader)
- G.L Mosse, *The Culture of Western Europe. The Nineteenth and Twentieth Century*. Boulder, Colorado 1988, pp. 52-61. (E-reader; book also in the reading room)
- G.H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*. Hinsdale, Illinois 1973, pp. 545-547 (cf. ass. 9, E-reader)
- J.L. Talmon, *Romanticism and Revolt. Europe 1815-1848*, London 1967, pp. 95-128 (Book in the reading room)

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