

# Overview of Romanticism and German Enlightenment 1780-1830

- French and British philosophers dominated the Enlightenment period of the 18<sup>th</sup> century
- From 1780s and throughout 19th century, philosophy was dominated by philosophers in the German speaking world. A revolution in intellectual thought. Germany also dominated in many other areas throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, creating new disciplines, cell biology, quantum physics, sociology, psychology, art history ...

## 1 ) Romanticism, Europe's last great cultural epoch

*Celebrating the idea of artistic genius and the importance of art, poetry, music, ideas in expressing inner beauty and enhancing human understanding*

Famous poets, thinkers, writers, historians, scientists, theologians, painters came to Jena over a 10 year period from 1794. *Jena was the birthplace of Romanticism*

German Idealism Philosophers/ Thinkers Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel

Music and Composers. Beethoven, Hayden, Schubert...

Literature Goethe, Schiller, August and Caroline Schlegel, Novalis...

Education, Art and Beauty Schiller, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Caspar David Friedrich

Language and Rise of Nationalism Goethe, Fichte

Contemporary reviews Madame de Staël and August Schlegel

## Key elements of Romanticism

Meaning of individuality, emphasis on individual experience

Importance of the Self, Free Will, Self-determination

Unity of humankind and nature. Being in nature is a journey into oneself.

The mind possesses an inherent creative energy.

## 2 ) Jena Set 1794

**What was the attraction of Jena University ? Why did it become the centre of a new revolution in German intellectual life, a hotbed of ideas?** (60 universities in German states)

- The abundance of free thinking intellectual discourse and little censorship, wide ranging curriculum, main focus of activity was its philosophical faculty rather than a theological one. 800 students. 50% attending philosophy lectures
- Professors enjoyed greater freedom than anywhere else in Germany
- A union of teaching and research. Students were mixing with leading minds working on the latest ideas
- No other university like it in Europe

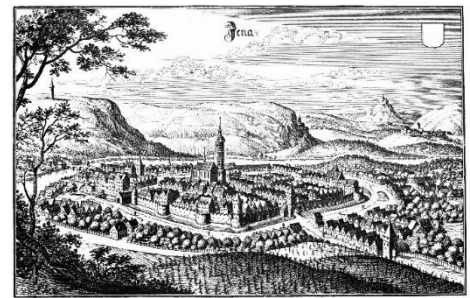
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, August and Caroline Schlegel, Johann Fichte, Schiller, all talented individuals. Goethe was the main attraction. As well as being a brilliant playwright, poet, literary critic, he was also a senior political adviser to Duke Carl August in the Weimar government. He had a huge influence over the way Jena University was run. Lots of freedom, few restrictions.  
**Goethe was the key person to Jena becoming a beacon of liberal thought and individuality.**

### 3 ) Jena, small university medieval town in Europe

- **Europe at this time-** despotic monarchies, no importance attached to individual freedoms, repressive censorship, restrictions. Extreme inequality, people starving, poverty stricken, illiterate. Feudalism widespread. Wars, chaos, instability. Continuous changes in balance of power. French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars

#### Jena, an idyllic setting for Romantics

- A large, open market square, a huge church with a tower that dominated the skyline, a medieval castle, surrounded by fields, parkland and a river. And a university with 800 students and an extensive library of 50,000 books



4 ) Map of Europe 1792

## 5) Kant and censorship in Prussia

- **1785 in Jena University**, new newspaper was founded “die Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung” with the sole purpose of disseminating Kant’s philosophy. **Kant argued that it is the human mind and experience that shapes our understanding of the world, rather than any rules written and imposed by God.** “Existence of God cannot be proved. God is not a being outside me but merely a thought within me. Humans are compelled to believe in God because their minds are built that way”. Contributors to the newspaper included Goethe, Schiller, Fichte
- 1793 Kant in Königsberg, attempted to publish the Second of the four Pieces of **Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason**, in a journal in Berlin
- However, the King's censorship commission which had been established that same year as a response to the French Revolution refused permission for its publication
- So Kant arranged to have all four pieces published as a book going through the philosophy department at the University of Jena to avoid the need for theological censorship.
- The Prussian King reprimanded Kant for his insubordination.
- When Kant published a second edition in 1794, a royal order was issued that required Kant never to publish or even speak publicly about Religion.

## 6 ) Main Thinkers of German Idealism 1780-1850

- Immanuel Kant 1724-1804 Königsberg University(his ideas became starting point for a century of German Philosophy, inspiring and influencing others)
- Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller 1759-1805 Jena
- Johann Gottlieb Fichte 1762-1814 Jena, Berlin
- Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling 1775-1854 Jena, Würzburg, Berlin
- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel 1770-1831 Jena, Bamberg, Berlin

## 8 ) Jena Set, Influences, debates and disagreements

- Most key Romantic figures working together at the University, living in close proximity to each other in Jena.
- **Philosophers Walk** Thinkers, writers poets openly debating and disagreeing with each other.
- Proliferation of new ideas addressing basic questions **What do we know? What can we know? How do we know it ? How do we make sense of the world ?**
- Collaboration, influence, competition and conflict.. between Fichte Schelling Hegel. Some philosophers attracted more students than others. Financial incentives

**Jena Set placed the free self at the centre of everything (Fichte). ( This was at a time when Europe was ruled by monarchs and leaders who controlled many aspects on a person’s life)**

**“ A person should be self determined, never letting himself be defined by anything external “**

**Emphasised the value of individual experience and individuality,Free Will and Self-determination**

## **9 ) Johann Friedrich von Schiller 1759-1805**

- Considered Germany's most important classical playwright
- Produced a Journal, Horen, in 1795 in an attempt to bring together the best of German culture, independent of State lines but bound by a shared language, widely circulated and available to anyone. War was raging all over Europe. The Journal was conceived as a happy distraction. "A nation is defined by words, thoughts and culture"
- It focused on art, culture, philosophy and poetry.
- Aim to establish a "literary society" and assemble the "nation's finest minds" this facilitated setting up of the Jena Set
- In the first issue were contributions from Fichte (discussing truth), Wilhelm (concept of masculinity and femininity in Antiquity) and Alexander von Humboldt (an allegory set in ancient Greece), August Schlegel (extracts of Dante's Inferno), Goethe (Roman Elegies, his poems were sensual, shocking and full of nudity)
- Herder "Horen should swap a letter and become Huren"
- Wrote "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man" This was regarded as the founding document for a new generation of thinkers and writers. It elevated imagination above reason, science and philosophy. Hegel called it a masterpiece.
- "Art improves the character and without beauty there's no sense of morality. It is through beauty that we reach freedom. Human beings have an inborn drive towards perfection. The mind possesses an inherent creative energy. Senses are capable of perfection"
- This idea of perfectibility is one of the central concepts of German Aesthetics. "Each creation, poem, music, art opens the way to a better more perfect world, enabling us to transcend the present". Perfectibility is about achieving harmony between inner life and outer life.
- Within the Romantic movement , there was a profound importance attached to artistic creativity .

## **10 ) Johann Fichte 1762-1814**

- **Kant's ideas influenced Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, all had their own interpretation of idealism**
- **Fichte's starting point for everything was the ich and its relationship to the external world, the non-ich.**
- **Argued that external reality is a creation of the knowing mind**
- **The ich/I, the knowing subject is the cause of external reality. External reality is the non-ich**
- **Emphasis on the ich means being self-aware as the prerequisite for "being aware and concerned for the other"**
- **Self is the source of everything (huge influence on German idealism)**
- **Schelling argued against Fichte's ideas, a knowing subject cannot exist without an object. Reality is not a creation of the I.**
- **There is no difference between subjective experience and objective external reality**
- **Fichte hadn't taken adequate notice of nature in his philosophical system " Fichte views nature only as an object in its subordination of humanity"**

## 11 ) Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling 1775-1854

- A major figure in German Idealism, born in Wurttemberg
- Highly gifted child, fluent in classical languages by 8yrs old.
- At age 15yrs, enrolled at a seminary, a place of higher education.
- Shared lodgings with Hegel and became close friends.
- Inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution and influenced by Kant, Fichte, Spinoza and writings of Goethe, Novalis, Schlegel,
- His early publications brought him fame and recognition
- 1798 appointed to Jena University as Professor of Philosophy at 23yrs
- Met and married Caroline Schlegel
- Wrote many books, essays. Radical, original ,new perspectives.



## 11 ) Kant and Schelling

Kant aimed to bridge the gulf between Rationalism and Empiricism

Both approaches are partly right and partly wrong

We need both our senses and reason to understand the world.

We experience the world through our senses, admitting the existence of the world but we cannot truly understand it as it is in itself. Laws of nature only exist because our mind conceives them.

“We can only know things as they appear to us but never the thing in itself” Kant

Schelling disagreed, “The world is intuitively knowable”

“The system of nature is also the system of our mind”

“ Humans are firmly within nature, both at one and part of nature” “Mind is invisible nature while nature is visible mind”

## 12 ) German Idealism

- A school of thought which insisted that reality was inseparable from our minds and our perception
- Ideas of the mind, not material things constitute and determine our reality.
- A belief that what we call the external world is created by our own minds. Our mind gives shape to the external world
- Rejected the concept of duality.
- There is no body/soul. No subjective and objective. No sharp line defining the ego and extended reality.

### 13 ) Naturphilosophie by Schelling

- Nature and ich are an interconnected whole, cannot be separated. Philosophy of oneness
- Self and Nature are identical, not divided between mind and matter.
- Humanity's connection with nature is emotional and inexplicable. Nature can soothe, heal and fill us with joy' Walk in the mountains, in the forests...
- It is important to feel rather than observe what you are seeing, to discover yourself in nature and to be one with everything living
- Nature is just I, a World Spirit
- Echoes "*Man bears the whole universe within himself*" Spinoza

### 14 ) The Second Self, Discovery of Unconscious

- Man's real essence wasn't contemplation but activity "Creation is the only fully autonomous activity of man"
- The world consisted of phenomena which varied in their degree of consciousness
- Process of Creation(three levels)
- Inorganic, rocks etc gradually life infuses them producing the first biological species
- Organic , living things
- Consciousness , only present in humans. Man is striving towards a higher consciousness.

This is the goal, the World Spirit, the Ultimate Reality

- Nature presents progressive stages of the will and is striving toward something

### 15 ) Nature as a Living Organism

- Entire physical world/nature is a living organism, constantly developing it's potential
- There is a continuous process of creation, new things happening
- Everything is related to each other. There is a purpose for everything.
- This idea was popular amongst German thinkers, Herder, Goethe.
- Nature was teleologically ordered, an unending evolution. These ideas strongly influenced Hegel and Marx.

### 16 ) Art and the Unconscious

*"Art and Philosophy address the same basic idea, the link between the world of phenomena and the world of ideas"* Schelling's ideas form basis of Aesthetics of Romantic Movement

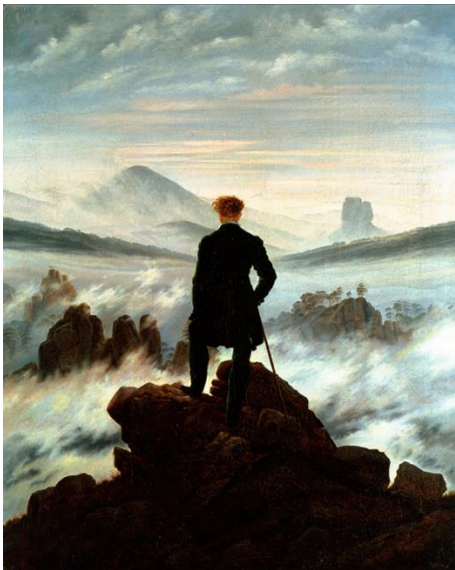
*"No aspect of modern art does not owe something important to Romanticism. The whole exuberance, anarchy and violence of modern art, it's unrestrained, unsparing exhibitionism is derived from it"* Arnold Hauser, Art Historian

- During the Romantic period, Art was transformed. It wasn't just about imitation or representation but expression of the individual. The artist creates values

- Schelling “Artists have ability to dive deep into unconscious forces, which move within him and bring them to consciousness. For art to have value it must tap into this unconscious area of the self”
- Schiller “Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man”. He wrote “ Art improves the character and without beauty there’s no sense of morality”

### 17 ) Caspar David Friedrich 1774-1840

- Most famous German Romantic landscape painter. Political leanings of a 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal and a passionate advocate of change. Believed in the individual’s right to protest and the individual’s fight for freedom.
- Strongly influenced by German Idealism and its thinkers and writers, especially Goethe and Schelling’s Naturphilosophie. Man is one with nature. The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog” 1818
- He emphasised the subjective experience of the individual “the painter should not only paint what he sees but also what he sees within him”.
- Deeply affected by Napoleon’s invasion of the German States in 1806 and the destruction caused by a foreign army
- 1810 Some of his paintings sent to Berlin as part of an exhibition
- The Solitary Tree 1822. often seen as a symbol of an emerging national German consciousness. The oak tree representing the German soul, overcoming adversity



### 18 ) Battle of Jena 1806

- 1806 Napoleon declared war on Prussia and other German states
- French army moving towards Berlin, Jena was directly in its path
- Prussian army moving from one direction, French army from another, finally facing each other in Jena.
- Whilst waiting for the Prussian army to arrive, the French army destroyed much of Jena, looting stealing, burning buildings, people fled the town
- Napoleon won this battle and subjugated the German States and Prussia
- Napoleon abolished Holy Roman Empire, replaced it with the Confederation of the Rhine (16 German States with Napoleon as their protector)

## 19 ) Language and Nationalism

We see here the birth of German Nationalism

- Fichte's speech 1807 "Addresses to the German Nation" told his audience that Germany constituted a nation based on their shared language and culture , even though there were many state boundaries dividing German territories
- He developed a concept of a national self. Ich no longer about the individual, experiencing reality (the ich of a nation)
- Importance of promoting the shared German Language as a means of achieving unity of the German nation
- Their language had been spoken for much longer than any other European language. German was a living language, spoken by Germans from the very beginning. French and Italian languages had been grafted on to a dead Latin root.
- Their common language linked them to their roots and to each other

Herder, a Weimar Philosopher 1768, "every nation speaks according to the way it thinks and thinks according to the way it speaks"

Truest expression of this was the poetry of old folks tales and songs which he collected and published. Herder pushed this idea of Germanic cultural and linguistic kinship. At this time many of the aristocracy in German states and Russia were speaking French. Herder "spit out the water of the Seine, Germans should speak German"

"A people of a language is made up of anyone who was raised in that language, poured his heart into it, learned to express his soul in it" published in Hören in 1795





## 20) "Germany" Madame de Staël in 1810

- A very rich, highly intelligent French woman, inherited a fortune from her father, late French King's Finance Minister
- Working and living with August Schlegel who was formerly part of Jena Set. He educated her in their writings and ideas
- She wrote about them in her book ***"Germans are deep thinkers, profound and serious whereas the French are frivolous, materialistic and superficial. The Germans have discovered the power of individuality and self determination"***

***"Intellectual ambitions of France have stagnated after the French Revolution, whereas the Germans have discovered the power of a free self. There is a general conformity of thinking in France. The French simply followed the general will, as people had risen up during the French Revolution, others had marched blindly along"***

- Napoleon read the book and was outraged that ideas and works originating in Germany could be superior to French philosophers and French literature. He ordered its immediate destruction. However, he did think that these ideas and works originating in Germany were intellectually brilliant. Could all this individuality and free thinking be considered too dangerous to an autocrat ?
- Madame de Staël was placed under house arrest but escaped
- The book was published in England in 1813 and the U.S. and became a best seller, introducing romantic ideas to an international readership.
- This book defined and promoted Romanticism

## **21 ) Isaiah Berlin, Oxford historian of ideas.**

### **Romanticism, the greatest turning point in the history of Western Political Thought**

Considered the idea of individualism throughout history.

Argued that there were three main turning points in the history of Western political thought.

The first was Stoicism: This stopped seeing man as an individual only intelligible in the context of a social life. Inner experience and inner salvation were of equal importance.

The second was with Machiavelli: Political values are incompatible with Christian ethics.

However, the most important turning point was During the Age of Romanticism, producing a revolutionary new set of values.

### **German Idealism**

Listen to your inner voice to create goals and values. These are created by the individual. This was a basic shift in the meaning of individuality and totally new.

This meant that morality was a creative process.

It elevated the artist alongside the scientist.

The artist creates and expresses himself, creating values.

A man is most truly himself when he creates.

- **Issues to be considered**

Meaning of individuality, emphasis on individual experience

The importance of the Self and Free Will and Self-determination

Art is the unifying bond between mind and the external world.

Core of Romanticism is the concept of the unity of humankind and nature, experiencing being in nature, a journey into oneself.