always already indefinite future.

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Romantic Rationality

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When we say of a person, "She is rational", we are praising her for being the sort of person who uses reason to make sensible inferences, who weighs options objectively, who is not prone to become lost in a swell of feelings and misguided passions, etc. The rational person is mentally well-balanced and healthy. There are even therapeutic methods whose goal it is to bring people to act more rationally.[1] In contrast, no one strives to be irrational. Indeed, to say of a person, "He is irrational", is to condemn his mental habits. An irrational person is removed from calm reflection and reasoning and drawn toward the passions, which philosophers have traditionally defined as opposing reason. In short, then, we praise individuals for their rationality and condemn them or, at least, pity them, for their irrationality.

Something similar holds for philosophical movements. A philosophical movement that is characterized as rational is one worthy of attention and study, while one which is branded irrational is dismissed and scoffed at by rigorous thinkers. So the charge of irrationality is one not to be taken lightly, for it can condemn a movement to the darkness of neglect.

My focus here will be upon two movements that blossomed in Germany during the 1700's, one lauded for its "rationality" the other still nowadays scathingly criticized for its "irrationality".[2] The German

[1] Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Therapy (or R.E.T.) is just one example among many others. There are, as far as I know, no therapies whose purpose it is to make people more irrational (even if some therapies do in fact end up doing just this).

[2] One can, for example, see this in authoritative texts such as *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Press, 1967). In particular, the entries on 'Enlightenment' (*Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 519-525) and 'Romanticism' (*Ibid.*, Vol. 7, pp. 206-209) by Crane Brinton reflect this. Of the Enlightenment, Brinton claims, "As a cultural period it is more closely linked with,

Enlightenment has been pervasively admired as the Age of Reason, a movement in which the ideals of reason, progress, and science dominated the intellectual concerns of its members.[3] The Enlightenment has been understood as a movement that encouraged individuals to think for themselves, to free themselves of the prejudice and superstitions that have always been a threat to rationality.[4]

The same cannot be said of the second movement, a movement that has generally been dismissed as an irrational movement, not worthy of philosophical consideration – even though it grew out of the German Enlightenment. The movement to which I refer is Early-German Romanticism and it has been seen as a movement led by poets drunk with passion, lost in dizzying flights of fancy rather than guided by reason to well-established conclusions.[5] Clearly, an intellectual movement

indeed more dependent on, formal philosophical thought than any other in the West" (*Ibid.* p. 519), and that it was characterized by three key clusters of ideas: reason, nature, progress. In his article on the Enlightenment he further claims that "the generation that matured about 1800 felt for the Enlightenment a contempt as deep as any on record" (*op. cit.*, p. 524). While acknowledging that many of the central figures of the various Romanticisms (in France, Germany, and Enlgand) came of age before 1800, he identifies this generation as the romantic generation. Hence, Brinton's claims entail that the romantics held reason in contempt. This is a misinterpretation of the Early-German Romantic Movement. In his entry on Romanticism, Brinton continues this interpretation of Romanticism as a movement that held reason in contempt (*op. cit.*, p. 206). More recently, we find the view of Romanticism as an anti-enlightenment movement in Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, especially Lecture 2, 'The First Attack on Enlightenment', pp. 21-45 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[3] This is the most general banner of the Enlightenment. For more nuanced treatments of this movement, see the collection of essays in *What is Enlightenment?*, edited by James Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[4] Arguably the most emphatic call to enlightenment is to be found in Kant's short essay, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* (1784).

[5] One obstacle to an accurate understanding of Early-German Romanticism is that it is often clumped with all of the other romanticisms that developed in Germany. Hence, it is crucial that we distinguish between three different breeds of romanticism that took root in Germany during the late 1700s and 1800s. Early-German Romanticism (1794-1803) was centered alternatively in Jena and Berlin. Among Early-German Romantics, or *Frühromantiker*, are August Wilhelm Schlegel and his brother Friedrich Schlegel, Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher. Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), Ludwig Tieck, Caroline Veit Schlegel, and Dorothea Schlegel Schelling. Early-German Romanticism must be distinguished from two other periods of Romanticism in Germany, Middle or High Romanticism and Late Romanticism. High Romanticism or *Hochromantik* (1808-1815), was shaped by the work of poets, artists, and thinkers, such as Achim von Arnim, Clemens Brentano, Caspar David Friedrich, and Adam

characterized in this way was bound to be dismissed as a worthless irrational movement.[6]

And this has been the sad, unjust fate of Early-German Romanticism. Few other intellectual movements lend themselves to more manifold misunderstandings and crude caricatures than does Early-German Romanticism. This is due, in part, to the rather unconventional way in which many of the thinkers of this movement chose to express their ideas, ideas whose content is no less conventional than the form in which they are expressed.[7] Most famously, we have Friedrich Schlegel's fragments in which we find such outlandish claims as: "Poetry and philosophy should be made one"[8]; "Viewed subjectively, philosophy, like epic poetry, always begins in the middle"[9]; and "Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry. Its aim isn't merely to reunite all the separate species of poetry and put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. It tries to and does [...] mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism..."[10] If one takes these fragments in isolation from their philosophical

Mueller, among others. This movement was more clearly literary. Finally, the members of late Romanticism or *Spätromantik* (1816-1830), included Franz Baader, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Johann von Eichendorff, and also the elder Friedrich Schlegel and Friedrich Schelling. As Frederick Beiser indicates, "Of course, there are continuities and family resemblances between these periods; but since they also have differing, even opposing, characteristics, it is important to distinguish between them. It is a common error to interpret early Romanticism in the light of later Romanticism, as if the later philosophy and politics of the movement are true without qualification for its earlier phase" (Introduction to *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), xii.

[6] Frederick Beiser discusses some of these misinterpretations in 'Early Romanticism and the Aufklärung' in *What is Enlightenment?* (*op. cit.*): 317-329. An example of a misreading of Early-German Romanticism is found in Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (*op. cit.*) especially Lecture 2, 'The First Attack on Enlightenment', pp. 21-45.

[7] This 'unconventional' style has also been employed by a host of diverse thinkers, from Blaise Pascal to Ludwig Wittgenstein. Interestingly, however, a superficial view whereby the employment of this style reveals either the non-philosophical, or the philosophical-but-irrational-and-sloppy, nature of the project surrounds Schlegel in ways quite unlike the received views regarding other authors who employed this style.

[8] These fragments have been translated by Peter Firchow in *Friedrich Schlegel, Philosophical Fragments* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), and I shall use, with minor modifications, his translations. All references to Schlegel's original work are to *Friedrich Schlegel Kritische Ausgabe* (*KA*), in 35 volumes, edited by Ernst Behler et.al. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schoenigh, 1958 ff.). *KA* II, p. 161, *Kritische Fragment* Nr. 115, Firchow, p. 14.

[9] *KA* II, p. 178, *Athenäum Fragment* Nr. 84. Firchow, p. 28.

[10] *KA* II, p. 182, *Athenäum Fragment* Nr. 116. Firchow, p. 31.

underpinnings, they perhaps seem to be vague attempts to grant to poetry and to the feelings that poetry seeks to express, a majestically superior place and thus present a challenge to the traditional views of philosophy. And then a question suggests itself: does this call to rethink the structure of philosophy necessarily involve a move towards the irrational? In what follows I shall argue that it does not.

Early-German Romantic philosophy was a movement that can, in all fairness, be characterized as anti-foundationalist, i.e., as a movement skeptical of the existence of self-justifying first principles. In no way does this entail irrationalism. To illustrate this, one need only give attention to a momentous debate that took place during the period under consideration concerning the roles of reason and faith in securing a foundation for knowledge. The reaction of the Early-German Romantics to this debate unequivocally indicates their loyalty to reason.

The Jacobi-Mendelssohn Debate

The debate which came to symbolize so much, and indeed can accurately be characterized as "the true acid test for someone's loyalty to reason in late eighteenth-century Germany"[11] was the debate between Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and Moses Mendelssohn concerning Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's philosophical loyalties.[12] The issue debated by Mendelssohn and Jacobi was whether Lessing, a well-known member of the Berlin Enlightenment, was really a Spinozist. A "Spinozist" would grant reason absolute authority, even if that meant denying authority to the claims of faith. Because Spinoza was famous for his pantheism, the debate became known as the pantheism controversy. Inasmuch as this name suggests that

[11] Frederick Beiser, 'Early Romanticism and the Aufklärung', *op.cit.*, p. 323.

[12] For more on this debate, see: Alexander Altmann's *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1973), pp. 593-759; Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason, German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), esp. chap. 2, 'Jacobi and the Pantheism Controversy', pp. 44-91; Stephen Bell, *Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe* (University of London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 1984); George di Giovanni, 'The Unfinished Philosophy of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi' in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp. 1-167; Dale Snow, 'F.H. Jacobi and the Development of German Idealism', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 25, no. 3 (July 1987): 397-416, and Ibid., 'Jacobi's Critique of the Enlightenment', *What is Enlightenment?, op. cit.*, pp. 306-316.

pantheism was the central theme of the controversy, it is not an accurate description of the event, for what was really at stake in the debate was the issue of whether faith or reason should have the upper hand in human knowledge. One's response to this controversy became a kind of litmus test of one's philosophical loyalties precisely because in choosing a side in the debate, one was choosing either reason or faith as a foundation for knowledge.[13]

Jacobi claimed that on his deathbed, Lessing had confessed to him his own allegiance to Spinoza's philosophy, and hence to the fatalistic trappings of Spinoza's rationalist system. Jacobi used this alleged confession to further his critique of the Enlightenment's faith in reason. Mendelssohn was an important member of the Berlin Enlightenment and as such, a staunch defender of the claims of reason. In 1781 he was working on a tribute to his friend and fellow-philosopher Lessing, and it was at this time that Jacobi informed him of Lessing's confession.[14] Mendelssohn quickly realized that Jacobi planned to use Lessing as a symbol for the model of reason propounded by the Berlin Enlightenment and then, by equating it with Spinozism, to demonstrate the fatal consequences it had for religion and morality.

Jacobi developed his claims regarding Lessing's alleged Spinozism in a series of letters published in 1785 and entitled, *Über die Lehre Spinozas in Briefen an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn.* [15] An expanded edition of the

[13] We must keep in mind that in Germany, after the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, epistemological concerns became the focus of most philosophical work. Of utmost importance was the issue of philosophy's starting point; this was the problem of what constitutes the bedrock of our claims to knowledge. There was widespread agreement that an absolute principle was the foundation of all of our knowledge claims. The status of this principle was, however, by no means a settled issue. Some thinkers, most notably Fichte, held that this principle was a principle of consciousness, and that we had access to it through self-reflection. Most of the mainstream Enlightenment thinkers, including Mendelssohn, claimed that the first principle of knowledge had to be accessible via reason, and still others that the principle of all knowledge, whatever it might be, must be rooted in faith. Jacobi fits squarely into this category.

[14] This was *Morgenstunde oder Vorlesungen über das Daseyn Gottes* (Morning Hours or Lectures on the Existence of God) which was eventually published in October of 1785.

[15] It is not insignificant that this is four years after the publication of the first edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and two years before the publication of the second edition (1787). In fact, George di Giovanni indicates that Kant's emphasis on the tension between reason and faith in the second edition was probably influenced by Jacobi's publication. *Cf.* Di Giovanni, 'The First Twenty Years of Critique: The

letters was published in 1787 and came to be known as the *Spinoza Büchlein*. The core of Jacobi's argument against Spinoza's system is to be found in the *Supplement VII* to his *Spinoza Büchlein*. It is in this section of the work that he announces that, "All demonstration ends in fatalism" (*Alle Demonstration gebe in Fatalismus aus*). Jacobi's view of demonstration as ending in fatalism rests upon his view of knowledge. Jacobi understood knowledge in causal terms: to know x is to know the cause of x. The search for the cause of x leads us to y which leads to search for y's cause and so on, until we find the first cause, or the uncaused cause. But we cannot know this uncaused cause, for to know it would be to know its cause, and we would no longer be dealing with an uncaused cause. Something that is uncaused is by definition unknowable.

Jacobi goes on to argue that it is absurd to claim that the foundation of knowledge is a principle that can be known to us, for if we had knowledge of this first principle, we would know its cause, and if the first principle has a cause, it cannot be a first principle. Jacobi showed that there was an infinite regress involved in any attempt to *know* the first principle of knowledge. Clearly, an 'enlightened' thinker would shirk from the futility of infinite regresses, and certainly not call upon them to establish a foundation for knowledge. Yet, by linking Spinoza's uncompromisingly rationalist system to Lessing, a prominent member of the Berlin Enlightenment, Jacobi hoped to show that 'enlightened' thinkers were indeed on a path that would lead to the sort of infinite regress that he sketched in his *Spinoza Büchlein*.

Jacobi, of course, had an alternative to the atheistic and fatalistic consequences of the rationalist model of reason. He suggested that we give up the attempt to establish a first principle for philosophy on the basis of reason and instead accept the certainty with which we begin any chain of reasoning as an act of faith, not of well-grounded reason. For Jacobi, our edifice of knowledge must rest upon a foundation of self-justified beliefs, and these must be taken on faith, for to take them on the basis of anything else would be problematic along the lines sketched above. With this move, Jacobi challenged one of the central tenets of the Enlightenment – the primacy of reason. This is well expressed in these words from Jacobi to Mendelssohn:

> My dear Mendelssohn, we are all born in faith and must remain within this faith, just as we are all born in society and must remain within society. *Totum parte prius esse necesse est.* How can we strive for certainty when certainty is not known to us in advance; and how can it be known to us, other than through something that we already recognize with certainty? This leads to the concept of an unmediated certainty, which stands in no need of explanation (*Gründe*), but actually excludes all such explanation, and solely and alone with the represented things is the corresponding representation itself. Conviction based on argument is second-hand conviction. Reasons are only properties of the similarity with things of which we are certain. The conviction which brings these about arises from a comparison and can never be totally certain or complete. If faith is an act of holding something to be true without relying upon argument, then the very security we place in arguments of reason must be rooted in faith and so arguments of reason must take their strength from faith.[16]

Spinzoa Connection', *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, Paul Guyer, editor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 417-448.

Of course, for the person to whom this passage is addressed, Mendelssohn, reason was the uncontested foundation of knowledge. Yet, in this passage, Jacobi inverts the relation between reason and faith, rooting reason in faith. According to Jacobi, what one can grasp with the intellect is not nearly as vivid or certain as what one 'grasps' through faith. This is because the claims of faith are accepted on the basis of feeling, which is immediate, and stands in no need of mediation via demonstration. Jacobi's emphasis on faith was a challenge to the Enlightenment emphasis on the role of reason in the structure of knowledge and its progress.

While charging the Enlightenment thinkers with the absurd move of positing an absolute foundation of knowledge which could be explained through reason, that is, in pointing to the *irrationality* of their very rational enterprise, would it be far-fetched to accuse Jacobi of committing an even more condemnable form of irrationality – of altogether abandoning reason, and substituting it with faith?

Some of Jacobi's contemporaries thought that the one who could properly be charged with offenses against reason was Jacobi himself. Now, these are charges not to be taken lightly, for they are the first step towards dismissal from serious attention. Hence, it should come as no

[16] *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, (Breslau: Loewe, 1789), pp. 215 ff. The translation is mine, though I have consulted George di Giovanni's translation in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill, op. cit.*, p. 230.

great surprise that Jacobi has his share of defenders. Arguably the best contemporary defender that Jacobi has is George di Giovanni. Di Giovanni, who has translated several of Jacobi's works into English and is a leading authority on him, has tried to show why it is not accurate to classify Jacobi as an irrationalist. He has objected to portraits of Jacobi which paint him as an anti-Enlightenment, irrationalist thinker. According to di Giovanni's reading of Jacobi, Jacobi actually rehabilitated reason, by "acknowledging it as the source [...] of what he had called the certitude of faith – not the reason of the philosophers [...] but an inward-looking reason that had immediate access to the divine in us".[17] Di Giovanni even goes so far as to compare the "inner light" which Jacobi invokes, to Descartes' notion of reason with "the innate idea of God as its standard of perfection".[18] Obviously, such a comparison functions to link Jacobi with rationalism instead of with the various breeds of irrationalism which have been associated with him. Di Giovanni insists that Jacobi's move to reinterpret reason as inner light in no way signals a break with rationalism or implicates Jacobi in any anti-Enlightenment or irrationalist moves. Di Giovanni emphatically states that "Jacobi never intended to foster irrationalism".[19] Di Giovanni's reading of Jacobi cannot be ignored or easily dismissed. Yet, it does contrast quite strongly with another interpretation of Jacobi's project put forward by one of his contemporaries.

According to this reading, Jacobi's conclusion that our knowledge begins not with a first principle which can be demonstrated, but with an absolute first principle that we must accept by an act of faith reveals his foundationalism and his irrationalism. In claiming that feelings and sensations did more justice to the complexity of reality than philosophical reflection would ever be capable of doing, Jacobi parts company with Spinoza's rationalism and embarks upon a path leading to a blind leap of faith or *salto mortale*.[20] According to this interpretation of Jacobi's work,

[17] 'The Unfinished Philosophy of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi' in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill* (*op. cit.*), p. 43.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[20] Jacobi himself introduces this term in his *Spinoza Büchlein*. Yet, di Giovanni cautions us against translating this as any version of a "leap of faith", which does not appear anywhere in Jacobi's work, suggesting instead that we understand the appeal to a *salto mortale* as the inversion necessary to return us to our feet after being led by those thinkers addicted to explanation and who must walk on their heads (*op.cit.*, p. 195, note). There is some irony in the fact that the very phrase that Jacobi used to try to return philosophers to their senses, and away from what he perceived to be an irrational approach to understanding reality, became the phrase that his critics used to brand him an irrationalist, making leaps of faith instead of carefully reasoned moves. See especially Kant's essay, 'What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thought?' (1786).

Jacobi's spirited defense of the claims of feeling and faith, involves him in a serious abuse of the rights of reason.

One of the strongest, most fertile sources of this reading was the Early-German Romantic philosopher, Friedrich Schlegel. Schlegel was among the first to challenge what he classified as Jacobi's odd concoction of foundationalism and irrationality. And even if this is a misreading of Jacobi, that is, even if di Giovanni is correct that Jacobi was not moving away from reason, much can be gained from a careful consideration of Schlegel's criticisms of Jacobi. Even if we do not gain a greater understanding of Jacobi's philosophical project, once we begin to understand Schlegel's response to Jacobi, we are well on the way towards a proper understanding of what Early-German Romantic philosophy was about.

Romantic Rationality and Anti-Foundationalism

Friedrich Schlegel's critique of Jacobi's appeal to faith clearly illustrates the distance between what he classified as Jacobi's irrational leap of faith and the more reasonable and rational challenge that the Early-German Romantics posed to the problems with the rationalist foundationalism of the period. To view the romantic reaction to this foundationalism against the background of the Pantheism Controversy is a sensible and convincing way of doing justice to the Early-German Romantic Movement. The Early-German Romantics sought to show the inadequacies of the mainstream views of the Enlightenment project. But they also sought, and this much more vociferously, to show the inadequacies of what they branded as the irrationalist attacks on the Enlightenment. Thus, romantic doubts concerning enlightened reason were not a rejection of reason, but a refinement of it.

Although Schlegel agreed with Jacobi regarding the unknowability of the Absolute, claiming that "[t]o know already indicates a conditioned knowledge" and that "[t]he unknowability of the Absolute is an identical triviality," he did not accept the consequences that Jacobi drew from this observation.[21] Schlegel did not substitute knowledge of the Absolute as the starting point of philosophy with an appeal to faith that would secure

[21] *KA* XVIII, p. 511, Nr. 64. The term 'the Absolute' simply means that which is unconditioned.

the Absolute as the first principle of philosophy. Schlegel's move was more radical and yet rational. Schlegel's solution to the problem of the unknowability of the Absolute was to develop an alternative way to understand knowledge and reality – and it is in this development that Schlegel's anti-foundationalism takes shape.

The Absolute, a term of art during the period, is by definition unknowable, for to know x is to know the cause of x, its condition. (Causes are sub-types of conditions.) Nonetheless, Schlegel's acknowledgement of the unknowability of the absolute first principle does not force him into Jacobi's camp, as many have superficially assumed.[22] In sharp contrast, and reacting against Jacobi's *irrationalism*, Schlegel avoided the infinite regress caused by the search for an absolute foundation of knowledge while he championed the cause of objective truth against subjectivity. He attempted to do this by parting company with any foundational philosophy whatsoever. Schlegel avoids the infinite regress that Jacobi halted in his appeal to faith by looking to another way to understand the structure of our knowledge. Schlegel moves away from the line that leads to the regress and embraces the circularity of our attempts to establish a foundation for our claims to knowledge. Schlegel does not replace reason with faith – he transforms the very conceptual structure used to understand the basis of knowledge. This comes to light in his confrontation with Jacobi's *salto mortale*.

Schlegel's confrontation with Jacobi's *salto mortale* is found in various fragments in which Schlegel directly addresses specific problems of Jacobi's philosophical position, and in his review of Jacobi's novel *Woldemar*.[23] In this fragment from the *Athenaeum*, Schlegel ridicules Jacobi's futile attempt to advance knowledge which is objective by turning inward to faith which is subjective:

> The renowned *salto mortale* of the philosophers is often only a false alarm. In their thoughts they take a frightfully long approach run and then congratulate themselves on having braved the danger; but if one only looks a little more closely, they're still sitting on the same old spot. It's like Don Quixote's flight on the wooden horse. Jacobi too seems to me someone who, though he can never stop moving, always stays where he is: caught in a squeeze between two kinds of philosophy, the systematic and the absolute, between Spinoza and Leibniz, where his delicate spirit has gotten to be rather pinched and sore.[24]

[22] Most recently, Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, *op.cit.*, esp. pp. 21-45.

[23] This was published in 1796 and is found in *KA* II, pp.57-77. For more on Schlegel's reception of Jacobi's work, see *KA* VIII, pp. xxx-xxxvii; *KA* II, pp. 57-77; *KA* XVIII, p. 3, Nr. 3; p. 6, Nr. 26; pp. 7-8, Nr. 41; p. 9, Nr. 60; p. 13, Nr. 104; p. 21, Nr. 34; pp. 54-56, Nrs. 353, 356, 361, 364, 368, 371.

According to Schlegel, Jacobi appeals to a measureless increase (*Steigerung*) of subjectivity which he directs outwardly and which is posited infinitely as God, but is really only a leap into one's own subjectivity and hence, a false alarm. Faith cannot be the foundation of knowledge, for it does not lead us outward to reality but inward to our own subjectivity. Hence, it does nothing to explain how our beliefs come together to form knowledge claims.

In Schlegel's critique of Jacobi's *salto*, we find an echo of a criticism that had been raised by Mendelssohn, who was a pillar of the Berlin Enlightenment. Mendelssohn had charged Jacobi with offenses against reason in *Morgenstunden*. In lecture eight, he claims that there can be no duty to believe. The "spirit of inquiry" had to be kept alive and alert at all times for "blind faith" leads to superstition and fanaticism.[25] According to Mendelssohn, the gains of the Enlightenment, which were based on reason, and the simple truths of universal religion, which were anchored in common sense and not in the extravagance of mystical faith, should be protected from irrationalist attacks such as Jacobi's. Needless to say, Mendelssohn's commitment to rationality has never been questioned, though of course Schlegel's commitment to rationality is endemically overlooked.

Schlegel's critique of Jacobi's *salto mortale* clearly shows that Schlegel's romantic thought was not, as the commonly held misperception regarding the nature of Early-German Romanticism would have us think, a reaction against Enlightenment thought *tout court*. Mendelssohn, the famous 'rational' thinker and Schlegel, the allegedly irrational thinker, agreed that Jacobi's appeal to faith was an offense against the primordial philosophical task of defending rationality. The Early-German Romantics were not willing to forsake the objectivity of reason for the subjectivity of faith. They wanted to diversify the "light of reason", but not extinguish it. Hence, they were not working against the current of thought established by the Enlightenment thinkers, their commitment to objectivity manifested itself quite differently, but this should not blind us to the fact that there is an underlying common goal.

[24] *KA* II, p. 227 *Athenäum Fragment* Nr. 346, Firchow, p. 70.

[25] Altmann, *op. cit.*, p. 679.

Schlegel found much to object to in Jacobi's thought: his critique of Jacobi was more than just an observation on the sort of suicide into subjectivity towards which Jacobi's *salto* leads us. Schlegel also finds problems with the sort of dualism that underlies Jacobi's entire understanding of the tensions between reason and faith. Schlegel does not accept the false dichotomy that Jacobi sets up between knowledge and belief, nor Jacobi's way of reconciling it. First, Schlegel questions this dualism by asking: "Isn't belief and knowledge a completely false antithesis?"[26] Jacobi wants to overcome the primacy of reason over faith, but he never questions the traditional dualism that separates the two. Schlegel does question this dualism and it leads him to a most original solution regarding philosophy's starting point.

Schlegel's review of Jacobi's novel, *Woldemar* (1796), reveals Schlegel's commitment to objectivity. He writes:

> Truth cannot be extorted (obtained) and he who numbs his reason only in order to believe what his heart desires, ends, as is only fair, with a mistrust of the beloved truth itself.[27]

In this review, Schlegel defines philosophy as a search for truth, guided by a "pure interest in knowledge and truth", and this stands in direct opposition to Jacobi's characterization of philosophy in terms of an experience of revelation. Moreover, Schlegel demands of a philosopher argument, logical rigor. *What* the philosopher claims is just as important as *how* she maintains it. A thinker who allows his own subjectivity to guide the search for truth, placing what he wants to find before what is there to be found, is not a philosopher, but a sophist.[28] For this reason, Schlegel characterizes *Woldemar* thus:

[26] *KA* XVIII, p. 108, Nr. 941, my translation. See also *KA* XVIII, p. 112, Nr. 998.
[27] *KA* II, pp. 71-72, my translation.
[28] "Die erste subjecktive Bedingung alles echten Philosophierens ist -- Philosophie im alten Sokratischen Sinne des Worts: Wissenschaftsliebe, uneigennütziges, reines Interesse an Erkenntnis und Wahrheit: man könnte es *logischen Enthusiasmus* nennen; der wesentlichste Bestanteil des philosophischen Genies. Nicht *was* sie meinen, unterscheidet den Philosophen und den Sophisten: sondern *wie* sie's meinen. Jeder Denker, für den Wissenschaft und Wahrheit keinen unbedingten Wert haben, der ihre Gesetze seinen Wünschen nachsetzt, sie zu seinen Zwecken eigennützig missbraucht, ist ein *Sophist*; mögen diese Wünsche und Zwecke so erhaben sein, und so gut scheinen, als sie wollen" (*KA* II, p. 69).

> *Woldemar* is really an invitation to an acquaintance with God, and this theological work of art ends, as all moral *Debauches* end, with a *salto mortale* into the abyss of divine mercy.[29]

According to Schlegel, Jacobi is not a philosopher, for philosophers are guided by truth. We must presuppose that truth exists (*Wahrheit soll sein*), and let our investigations be guided by what we find, not by what we want to find. Jacobi does not do this, and so is a sophist, a thinker guided by what he wants to find. Schlegel objects to Jacobi's position on the grounds that it presupposes individual truths and so distorts reality and corrupts truth.[30] Schlegel writes:

> The elastic point from which Jacobi's philosophy departed was not an objective imperative, but rather an individual option.[31]

According to Schlegel, philosophy is the striving for truth and knowledge and this must be a communal, objective search; it must not be individualized by an appeal to faith. Strangely, here Schlegel's criticism echoes a claim made by one of Jacobi's supporters. Di Giovanni has claimed that in Jacobi's work, by means of faith, reality is revealed as irreducibly individual, in direct opposition to the universalizing function of conceptualization.[32] Di Giovanni sees promise in this move, for it clears a space for a historical dimension to philosophy. Schlegel was also aware of the move to the individual in Jacobi's work, but saw this as a move away from reason and philosophy, not as an enhancement of either.

Schlegel's critique of Jacobi's *salto mortale* clearly shows that he was not willing to accept revelation as a criterion for accepting a given claim. In his review of Jacobi's novel *Woldemar*, Schlegel rejects Jacobi's subjectivization and individualization of truth, and then poses a question which opens the path to the development of his own position. He writes:

[29] *KA* II, p. 77, my translation.
[30] "Wenn die wissenschaftliche Untersuchung nicht von der gerechten Voraussetzung, daß Wahrheit sein soll ausgeht, mit dem festen Entschluß und der Kraft, sie zu nehmen, wie sie gefunden wird, sondern von einer trotzigen Forderung, daß dies und jenes wahr sein soll: so muß sie mit Unglauben und Verzweifeln, oder mit Aberglauben und Schwärmerei endigen, je nachem der Untersucher mehr Mut hat, der Erfahrung oder der Vernunft Hohn zu sprechen" (*KA* II, p.70).
[31] *KA* II, p. 69, my translation.
[32] Di Giovanni, 'The First Twenty Years of Critique: The Spinoza Connection', *op. cit.*, p. 426.

> [Jacobi's] positive theory of faith can by no means be counted as philosophical...(That which Jacobi holds: 'that every proof presupposes something proved'; holds only for those thinkers who depart from one, single proof. What if, however, an externally unconditioned yet at the same time conditioned and conditioning *Wechselerweis* were the foundation of philosophy?) [33]

This important question, which Schlegel poses within the humble confines of a parenthetical remark, opens a clearing for his own position. It is a position that rejects the possibility of establishing a single, absolute foundation as the basis for our knowledge, but which does not, in any way, amount to a form of subjectivism or sophism. Schlegel's anti-foundationalism is philosophical -- that is, it is part of his commitment to an objective search for truth. Schlegel shares with Jacobi a concern about the problem of the pretense to knowledge of the Absolute, yet he is opposed to Jacobi's solution to this problem. Schlegel saw Jacobi's solution as one which involved a break with reason while maintaining a strong commitment to foundations. Schlegel opts to break with foundations and stay with reason.

Conclusion

Schlegel's critique of Jacobi's *salto mortale* reveals that Schlegel viewed reason as the ultimate touchstone of knowledge. It further reveals the uniqueness of the much maligned philosophical movement which he headed. While the Early-German Romantics do not abandon reason as the ultimate touchstone of knowledge, they do abandon the idea that philosophy begins with any first principle whatsoever. Once we understand this aspect of Early-German Romanticism, we can begin to understand (in)famous claims such as Schlegel's: "poetry and philosophy should be made one", "Philosophy must, like an epic poem, begin in the middle", and "Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry".[34] Romanticism was anti-foundationalist through and through; and it was so in an attempt to capture the inherent incompleteness of philosophy and knowledge. This inherent incompleteness puts philosophy, the Early-

[33] *KA* II, p. 72, my translation. For the most recent discussion of the central role of this concept in Schlegel's philosophy, see Manfred Frank, '*Wechselgrundsatz*: Friedrich Schlegels philosophischer Ausgangspunkt', *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 50 (1996): 26-50.

[34] *KA* II, p. 161, Nr. 115; p. 178, Nr. 84; p. 182, Nr. 116.

German Romantics believed, in contact with aesthetic experience and poetry. So Schlegel's outlandish claims on the relation between poetry and philosophy are not the ravings of a madman, but rather the rational consequence of his particular view of the structure of our knowledge.

It is time that we begin to treat Early-German Romanticism as the rational movement it was, instead of dismissing it as an irrational movement. A first step towards that end is to recognize the difference between Jacobi's irrational foundationalism and the rational anti-foundationalism of Early-German Romanticism. This is not only of historical relevance. For, under this light, the Early-German Romantics could be seen as holding the view that coherentism was the most *rational* epistemological posture. To show whether this is correct or not, is beyond the scope of the present paper. But what should be clear is that a defense of coherentism, even if it is coupled with a certain privileging of aesthetic experience, need not amount to any move away from reason.