

# HUMANITIES 4:

## LECTURE 23

### NOVALIS, FAITH AND LOVE, FRAGMENTS FROM THE NOTEBOOKS

# BRIEF BIOGRAPHY



- 1772-1801
- GEORG FRIEDRICH VON HARDENBERG (NOVALIS)
- STUDIED LAW, PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY IN JENA
- WORKED IN MINING ADMIN.
- FRIENDS WITH SCHILLER, SCHLEGELS, MET GOETHE, INFLUENCED BY SCHLEIERMACH.
- HYMNS TO THE NIGHT
- DIED OF TUBERCULOSIS

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- EARLIER KINGS: FREDERICK I, FREDERICK WILHELM I (=SOLDIER KING), FREDERICK II (=FREDERICK THE GREAT, PRO-ENLIGHTENMENT)
- KING FREDERICK WILHELM II (1786-1797)
  - ANTI-ENLIGHTENMENT
    - ✦ ESP. IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS
  - DEPLETED ECONOMIC & MILITARY STRENGTHS (E.G., WITH EXTRAVAGANT COURT) ON EVE OF NAPOLEONIC ERA
- KING FREDERICK WILHELM III (1797-1840)
  - MARRIED LOUISE OF MECKLENBURG-STRELITZ
  - TALENTED AND ARMED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS, BUT UNLUCKY IN EXECUTION/TIMING

# INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

## CENTRAL FEATURES OF GR

- THE INFINITE
  - ANTI-SYSTEMATIC, ANTI-RATIONAL, INCOMPLETE
  - SYMBOLISM AS REQUISITE FORM OF EXPRESSION
- IMAGINATION AND SUBJECTIVITY
  - POETIC CREATIVITY
  - REJECTION OF CONVENTIONAL NORMS
- IDEALIZATION OF NATURE
  - UNSPOILED
  - RURAL VS. CIVILIZED PEOPLE
- THE EXOTIC AND THE SUPERNATURAL

# NOVALIS ON ROMANTICISM

- NOVALIS' SELF-UNDERSTANDING OF ROMANTICISM:  
“THE WORLD MUST BE ROMANTICIZED.... WHEN I  
GIVE THE COMMONPLACE A HIGHER MEANING, THE  
CUSTOMARY A MYSTERIOUS APPEARANCE, THE  
KNOWN THE DIGNITY OF THE UNKNOWN, THE FINITE  
THE ILLUSION OF THE INFINITE, I ROMANTICIZE  
IT” (FR. #105).
- THE INFINITE, SYMBOLISM, ANTI-RATIONAL,  
INCOMPLETENESS, REJECTION OF CONVENTIONS.

# NOVALIS' POLITICS

- NOVALIS' VIEW OF FREDERICK WILLIAM III & LOUISE
  - THEIR LOVE/UNION IS FUNDAMENTAL AND REPRESENTS A RECOMMENDATION FOR RELATIONS WITHIN THE STATE THAT THEY GOVERN.
  - ✦ “THE COURT IS THE TRUE MODEL FOR A HOUSEHOLD. THE HIGHER HOUSEHOLDS OF THE STATE ARE MODELED AFTER IT, AND THE LOWER HOUSEHOLDS AFTER THESE HIGHER ONES, AND SO ON” (#29).
  - “THE KING AND QUEEN PROTECT THE MONARCHY MORE THAN 200,000 TROOPS [DO]” (#34).

# NOVALIS' POLITICAL THEORY (I)

- REJECTION OF ENLIGHTENED ABSOLUTISM
  - STATE IS AKIN TO “FACTORY” WITH MECHANICAL ADMINISTRATION, PROSPEROUS BUT TOO LIMITED.
  - LIKE “SQUARING THE CIRCLE” SINCE RAW SELF-INTEREST IS NOT TRULY LIMITED THEREBY AND LEADS TO REVOLUTION. (#36)
- REJECTION OF LIBERALISM
  - EXAGGERATED VALUE OF FREEDOM
  - ASOCIAL (OR INDIVIDUALISTIC) CONCEPTION OF MAN; INSUFFICIENT SENSE OF COMMUNITY.
- BOTH ENL. ABS. AND LIB. LACK INTERMEDIARY ENTITIES (E.G., GUILDS, COUNCILS) THAT COULD BUFFER POWER AND CREATE SOCIAL IDENTITIES.

# NOVALIS' POLITICAL THEORY (II)

- PROPOSAL: ORGANIC CONCEPTION OF STATE
  - STATE IS LIKE A LIVING BEING, A PERSON (FR. #421 & 122)
    - PLURALITY OF PARTS THAT FORM A WHOLE
    - WORK TOGETHER ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS
    - SENSITIVE TO EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES & POETIC!
  - ALLOWS FOR COMMUNITY AND TRADITION, WITHOUT SACRIFICING LIBERTY AND EQUALITY.
    - INDIVIDUALS CAN DEFINE THEMSELVES ONLY THROUGH SOCIAL INTERACTION, SO COMMUNITY IS NECESSARY FOR FREEDOM.
    - LOVE (IN A COMMUNITY) IS MORE POWERFUL THAN SELF-INTEREST.
      - LOVE, NOT LAW, IS THE BASIS OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LIFE.
      - “WHAT IS A POLITICAL UNION BUT A MARRIAGE?” (#36)

# NOVALIS' METHOD

- SERIES OF SENTENCES, TYPICALLY NO MORE THAN ONE PARAGRAPH
  - NOT ESSAYS, LETTERS, OR OTHER CONTINUOUS METHOD OF EXPLICATION.
- SPECIAL LANGUAGE: METAPHORIC, CRYPTIC, VERNACULAR, BUT STILL MYSTERIOUS, EVEN MYSTICAL. (#1-3).
- EMPHASIS ON POETRY