Dynamic Stillness

Philosophical Conceptions of Ruhe
in Schiller, Hölderlin, Büchner, and Heine

Max Niemeyer Verlag Tübingen 1987
Contents

PREFACE .................................................. IX
ABBREVIATIONS ......................................... XI

PART I – DYNAMIC STILLSNESS .......................... 1

2. THE SYNTHESIS OF PERFECTION AND BECOMING IN SCHILLER’S ÜBER NAIVE UND SENTIMENTALE DICHUNG. A REEVALUATION OF THE CATEGORY “IDYLLIC” .............................. 4

The Naïve and the Sentimental as Philosophical Principles .............................. 4
Schiller’s Application of the Terms beyond the Aesthetic Sphere ................... 4
The Naïve and the Sentimental in the Context of Contemporary Philosophy .... 6
The Naïve and the Concept of Intellectual Intuition ......................................... 7
The Sentimental and the Concepts of Infinite Approximation ......................... 9
The Unity of the Naïve and the Sentimental .................................................. 10
The Self-cancellation of the Naïve ................................................................. 21
The Self-cancelation of the Sentimental ......................................................... 23
Contradiction and Resolution ........................................................................ 25
Schiller’s Desire for Unity ............................................................................. 28
Ambiguities in the Category “Idyll” .................................................................. 32
The Conflicting Definitions ............................................................................ 32
The Idyll as an Epigee Subcategory ................................................................. 35
The Idyll as a Sentimental Subcategory ......................................................... 34
The Idyll as a Pale Synthesis of the Naïve and the Sentimental ..................... 35
The Idyll as a Valid Synthesis of the Naïve and the Sentimental ..................... 37
Interpreting the Idyllic ................................................................................... 46
The Idyllic as Synthesis .................................................................................. 46
Dynamic Stillness and German Kleist .............................................................. 47
Schiller’s Theoretical Essays ........................................................................ 47
Preface

For centuries the German word Ruhe has had almost magical associations. Religious thinkers considered repose a principal attribute of God, poets wrote odes to stillness, and heroes strove for a goal of tranquillity and composure. Through a study of Ruhe one can recognize the evolution of several distinct traditions in German intellectual history. Drawing upon a large number of primary texts and the few secondary works which address the topic, I differentiate in this study four kinds of Ruhe. First, religious: in the mystic-pietistic tradition in Germany stillness is considered not only a characteristic of divinity but also a necessary precondition of man's contact with God. Second, aesthetic: in the eighteenth century Wieland, who considered sculpture the highest of aesthetic forms, argued that stillness is a facet of all great art. Third, psychological-moral: From Socratic texts such as Seneca's De tranquillitate animi and later writings such as Spinoza's highly popular Ethics many a German sought to achieve the Gemeinsame of a life in harmony with the laws of the cosmos. Fourth, political: At least since the Allgemeine Instabilität der politischen Staaten of 1794 Germans have associated political stabilization with Ruhe. According to this influential document the citizen is obliged to preserve "Ruhe und Ordnung": the state in turn guarantees "Ruhe und Sicherheit".

Besides analyzing Ruhe according to the spheres in which it functions, one can make a distinction, as Hölderlin does, between a "lebendige" and a "leere Ruhe", what I call dynamic and deficient stillness. In the first half of this study I analyze the eighteenth-century concept of dynamic stillness; here I offer new readings of Schiller's essay Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung and Hölderlin's novel, Hyperion. In the second half I analyze Büchner's story Lenz, in particular its inversion of the traditionally positive associations of Ruhe, and I consider Heine's Zeitschrift and his satire Deutschland. Ein Wunderkind in the context of the increasingly imperative association of Ruhe with political quietude.

---

1 I often resist translating the word "Ruhe" as it is not to lose its multiple associations. Possible English translations cover a wide range and include such diverse words as quiet, calm, peace, detachment, rest, harmony, sleep, indifference, serenity, rest, resignation, composure, equanimity, stillness, repose, tranquility, silence, and rest.
Rahne is an important term that enters into a remarkable number of literary works from Meister Eckhart's sermons to Peter Handke's *Kapuz*1. I have focused on four authors whose works occupy significant positions in the development of the concept. While I view the works within their specific intellectual-historical contexts, I focus on the texts themselves. In each chapter the reader will find new interpretations. These range from major reinterpretations, like the revaluation of the category "idiyll" in *Ch-lo-nasse* and *sentimentale Dichtung*, the rereading of the conclusion of *Hypomnemata* and of the discourse on art in *Lene*, to a more modest introduction of new dimensions to our understanding of the works in question, for example, the relation of the naive and sentimental to the philosophical discourse of the late eighteenth century, the significance of allusions in *Hypomnemata* to Sophocles' *Oidipus* and *Kleis*, and the significance of *Naive und sentimentale Dichtung*, and the importance of *diptych* and *unterwegs* for an understanding of Heine's *Zeitgesichter*.

Rather than burden the reader with a schematic history of the concept at the outset of this study, I have tried to allow both a conceptual and historical description of Rahne to emerge simultaneously from my discussion of the individual texts. Dynamic stillness is analyzed in chapters one and two, deficient stillness in chapters three and four. The traditions of aesthetic, religious, and psychological-oral stillness are discussed in the context of Böhrer's inversion of these traditions, and the politics of Rahne is viewed together with Heine's critique of political quietude. In each case a central text or set of texts presents us with the starting point for a consideration of the philosophal and historical dimensions of Rahne. By analyzing the works not only in their intellectual-historical contexts but as aesthetic constructs, I have tried to avoid the commonest danger of intellectual-historical studies—treating texts merely as documentary proof of a particular historical development. Competing discourses, narrative levels, rhetorical language, and other "intrinsic" features occupy prominent positions in my analyses.

Finally, besides attempting to combine close textual readings with an awareness of intellectual-historical context, I have found it useful to adopt a pediatic approach, particularly in the first two chapters, where my readings challenge both traditional and poststructuralist interpretations.

---

1 A list of authors who wrote sermons and hymns to stillness becomes quite long, even if one limits it to a time span of one generation. In the late eighteenth century alone one thinks of Friedrich Ludwig vom Stein (*An die Ruhe* 1788), Friedrich Schleiermacher (*An die Stille* 1788), Christian Ludwig Neff (*An die Ruhe* 1790), *Die Ruhe. Eine anagogische Hymne*, 1800, *Hymne an die Ruhe* 1800, Heininger (*An die Ruhe* 1797), and Eckard (*Die Stille* 1789, *An die Ruhe* 1789, *An die Stille* 1790).