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Romantic Symbolism Re-examined: The Ontic Fallacy

Ryan Mitchell Worth

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Romantic Symbolism Re-examined: The Ontic Fallacy

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Romantic symbolism is a poorly understood concept. It was first formulated by the Romantics in a variety of contexts. Goethe develops his theory of the symbol most notably in his scientific works. Schelling's approach to the Romantic symbol is firmly rooted in his philosophical writings. Coleridge articulates a Romantic notion of symbolism across his extensive literary criticism. The foundational influence of these related theories of Romantic symbolism can be seen in the artistic, literary, and scientific productions of Romantic-minded individuals all over Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. However, the nature and scope of the Romantic symbol as originally formulated by Goethe, Schelling, and others has been obfuscated in unfortunate ways by the contemporary theoretical assumptions and narrow interpretations of recent academic scholarship. This thesis restores the original connotation of the Romantic symbol by identifying the common way in which it is misconstrued: the ontic fallacy.

Keywords: symbol, allegory, romanticism, ontology, Ernst Cassirer, Paul de Man, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Friedrich Schelling

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If the essence of poetry must be a lie, throw it to the dogs, or banish it from your republic, as Plato would have done. He who can reconcile poetry with truth and wisdom, is the only true "poet" in its real sense, "the maker" "the creator" – why must this mean the "liar," the "feigner," the "tale teller?" A man may make and create better things than these.

- G.G. Lord Byron from the Letter on Bowle's Strictures (1821)

Introduction

There are dominant threads in the scholarly discussion of Romantic symbolism (De Man, Wimsatt, Halmi) in which there is a persistent lack of consensus or clarity, primarily regarding the nature and scope of the Romantic symbol as originally formulated by Goethe, Schelling, and others. These theoretical and critical incongruities predominately center on the ontic fallacy. Nicholas Halmi provides a useful distinction between Romantic symbolism and other notions of symbolism with which Romantic symbolism is easily conflated:

This is not a study of poetic imagery. The albatross of Coleridge's ballad *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and the blue flower of Novalis's novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* may be called Romantic symbols, but not of the kind to which I am referring. What I am referring to was strictly a theoretical construct, the purpose of which, I shall argue, was not to describe objects of perception but *to condition the perception of objects* [emphasis added]. (1)

This is a workable orientation of the topic and, while Halmi's subsequent argument is faulty, we may begin here an attempt to identify the evidence concerning the Romantic symbol.

The proper frame for understanding the Romantic symbol, and thus the beginning of a solution to the ontic fallacy (that is, for the common way in which the Romantic symbol is misconstrued) would not be to articulate the state of being of a given object but rather would be the semantic idea by which any ontological understanding of an object must necessarily be

predicated. Significantly, the Romantic symbol comes from an ontological theory of *becoming* rather than a semantic theory for *being*. The interposition of contemporary critical theories in attempting to understand the original formulation of Romantic symbolism has resulted in the obfuscation of Romanticism's original scope and aim, as well as of Romantic symbol theory *per se*.

By first looking at the historical context of the emergence of a Romantic theory of symbolism, we may understand three canonical definitions of the Romantic symbol, their scope, and their limitations. This will put in context the subsequent theoretical stalemate in contemporary discussions of Romantic symbolism. Finally, a re-orientation of the problem of Romantic symbolism that is more conducive to the topic as conceived by the Romantics themselves can be formulated.

I. Historical Background

Romantic figures philosophized extensively about the nature of reality and the individual. The philosophical and aesthetic trends of Romanticism have been discussed extensively in recent times (Wellek, Cassirer, Barzun, Schenk); therefore, highlighting several key developments in Romantic philosophy will show the emergence of the Romantic theory of the symbol.

The Romantic symbol is centered on an organic metaphor. One way the significance of the organic metaphor, its emergence, and its impact on Romantic art can be illustrated is by looking at the development of the city of Rome as an object symbol in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Rome was physically and symbolically at the center of the ongoing *querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* because it was a synthetic locus of the ancient past and the present. It was in this context that Neo-Classical and Romantic thinkers articulated their understanding of nature in relation to the self, resulting in the ideas which would form Romantic symbolism.

Rome attracted the attention of many great minds of the eighteenth century who came from throughout Europe to see the city for themselves, establishing Rome as a central part of the Grand Tour. This was in large part due to Rome's archeological remains, still partly visible, though mostly undisturbed by modern archeological efforts. The partially visible ruins of the ancient city, obscured by the vegetation and detritus of many negligent centuries, as well as the artistic artifacts coming to light in ever greater numbers after the archeological discoveries at Herculaneum and elsewhere, became a primary source of inspiration for the Neo-Classicism of the age.¹

A new rise in enthusiasm for the city of Rome formed an inextricable part of the intellectual developments of the time. Andrieux points out "It was in Rome that all the artists of Italy and Europe would gather to work, excited by an ardor quite as burning as that of the first humanists. They were to create there that intellectual ferment from which European classicism would arise" (382). Edward Gibbon (1737-94) provides characteristic evidence of this with his memory of entering the city for the first time in 1764. "My temper is not very susceptible of enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm which I do not feel I have ever scorned to affect. But at the distance of twenty five years I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the *eternal City*" (*Memoirs* 134). To arrive at Rome, one unavoidably traversed the extensive *campagna romana* which intrinsically linked the city of Rome to Nature. This experience shaped Gibbon's first experience with the city; "La Campagne de Rome! Belle plaine depuis qu'on a passè la montagne de Viterbe. Il semble que dans ce pays, plus la nature a fait pour les hommes, et plus aussi ils negligent ses dons" ("The countryside of Rome! A beautiful grassland after we traversed the mountain of Viterbo. It appears that in this landscape, the more nature creates for mankind, the more they neglect his gifts"; Bonnard 235;

my trans.). Gibbon's negative reaction to mankind's inability to make good use of nature's gifts, presumably by not living harmoniously within the landscape, is curiously contrasted with a dreamlike state induced by his experience of the ruins of ancient Rome. He says, "Nous sommes arrivè à Rome à cinq heures du soir. Depuis le pons Milvius j'ai etè dans un songe d'antiquitè qui n'a etè interrompu que par les Commis de la Douane..." ("We arrived in Rome at five in the evening. After passing the Milvian bridge I entered into a vision of antiquity which would have continued uninterrupted if not for the Customs Officials..."; Bonnard 235; my trans.). Gibbon goes on to imply that his dream-like experience crossing the Milvian bridge into the ancient past was spoiled by the customs official because such people are, "Gens trè modernes qui nous ont force d'aller à pied chercher un logement..." ("An excessively modern type of people who forced us to proceed on foot to find lodging..."; Bonnard 235; my trans.). The collision between the demands of the present which preoccupy modern people and the imaginatively reconstructed past enjoyed by classically minded individuals results in tension.

Gibbon's experience with the Italian countryside, the remnants of the ancient city of Rome, and its modern inhabitants inspired his magnum opus *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a work characteristic of Enlightenment attempts to explicate historical outcomes through the application of causal reasoning. Gibbon recalls:

The historian of the decline and fall must not regret his time or expence, since it was the view of Italy and Rome which determined the subject. In my Journal the place and moment of conception are recorded; the fifteenth of October 1764, in the close of evening, as I sat musing in the Church of the Zoccolanti or Franciscan fryars, while they were singing Vespers in the Temple of Jupiter on the ruins of the Capitol. But my original plan was circumscribed to the decay of the City, rather than of the Empire: and,

though my reading and reflections began to point towards the object, some years elapsed, and several avocations intervened before I was seriously engaged in the execution of that laborious work. (*Memoirs* 136-137)

Here we see Gibbon acknowledge that the ruins of Rome filled with the pageantry of Franciscan friars initially focused his mind on the decay of the physical elements of the ancient city.

However, Gibbon soon transcended his initial thoughts which related the discreet artifacts of Rome to the superficial fact of its physical decline by articulating the ruins instead as a symbol of the decay of the Roman Empire, an abstract and dynamic entity.

Even before Gibbon's work, a renewed interest in the material history of the Classical past was exhibited by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-78) in his etchings of Rome. This ran counter to the emphasis on Rome's significance as a Christian religious site dominant in the early eighteenth century. Speaking about Piranesi, Bosworth said, "Detecting what then mattered most about Rome's History, he gave a greater emphasis to classical than to religious sites. Soon another fan of the 'fact' he was involved in measuring ancient edifices more accurately than in the past" (37). In a similar spirit, among the city's repository of ancient artifacts, Johann Joachim Winkelmann (1717-68) received inspiration for the Neo-Classical theory of art outlined in his 1764 work *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* ("History of Ancient Art"). It was Winkelmann who said, "Der einzige Weg für uns, groß, ja, wenn es möglich ist, unnachahmlich zu werden, ist die Nachahmung der Alten" ("The only way for us to become great, and, if indeed it is possible, inimitable, is through the imitation of the ancients"; 29; Carter 32). These are only a few examples of how Rome and its ancient history came to persistently preside over the imagination of Europe as the eighteenth century progressed.

The Romantic poets and philosophers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century are commonly understood by recent commentators to have held the Classical past in much lower esteem in relation to the development of their own art and philosophy than their Neo-Classical forerunners. The following statement is characteristic of the frequent reductive attempts in the twentieth century to summarize Romanticism: “What is meant by ‘the romantic movement’?... It meant freedom from the constraint of classical forms and the smooth tightness of neoclassical technique, in literature as well as art” (Ruskin 34). Generalizations of this type are not entirely without justification. Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle), in his 1823 brochure “Racine et Shakespeare,” a work outlining key tenets of Romanticism, claimed:

Il faut du courage pour être romantique, car il faut *hasarder*. Le *classique* prudent, au contraire, ne s’avance jamais sans être soutenu, en cachette, par quelque vers d’Homère, ou par une remarque philosophique de Cicéron, dans son traité *De Senectute*. (370)

(It requires courage to be a Romantic, because one must *take a chance*. The prudent *classicist*, on the contrary, never takes a step without being supported, secretly, by a line from Homer or by a philosophical comment made by Cicero in his treatise *De Senectute*.)
(Peer, *The Romantic* 107)

If Romanticism held Classicists and their reliance on Classical models in such disdain, then an interest in Rome and its Classical treasures would go into decline among key Romantic figures. This, however, is not the case.

When Goethe entered the Eternal City on November 1, 1786, he exclaimed, “Ja ich bin endlich in dieser Hauptstadt der Welt angelangt!” (“Now, at last, I have arrived in the First City of the world!”; *Italienische* 134; Auden 128). He would claim of his trip to Rome that “Ob ich gleich noch immer derselbe bin; so mein’ ich bis aufs innerste Knochenmark verändert zu sein”

(“Though I am still always myself, I believe I have been changed to the very marrow of my bones” *Italianische* 157; Auden 147). This response reminds us of similar cries by earlier more predominately Neo-Classical thinkers such as Piranesi:

Io vi dirò solamente, che di tali immagini mi hanno riempito lo spirito queste parlanti ruine, che di simili non arrivai a potermene mai formare sopra i disegni, benchè accuratissimi, che di queste stesse ha fatto l’immortale Palladio, e che io pur sempre mi teneva innanzi agli occhi. (116)

(I will tell you only that these speaking ruins have filled my spirit with images that accurate drawings, even such as those of the immortal Palladio, could never have succeeded in conveying, though I always kept them before my eyes.) (117)

Goethe’s enthusiasm for Rome comes early for continental Romanticism and pre-dates the radical events of the French Revolution beginning in 1789. Nevertheless, it reveals the continuance of an interest in Rome by an important transitional figure between the two movements.

While the outward interest in Rome remains steady for Neo-Classicism as well as Romanticism, the underlying motives for this interest in the Classical past are distinct for both movements. They are, however, related. Barzun, in speaking about artistic, cultural, and intellectual movements writes:

Clearly, the one thing that unifies men in a given age is not their individual philosophies but the dominant problem that these philosophies are designed to solve. In the Romantic period... this problem was to create a new world on the ruins of the old. The French Revolution and Napoleon had made a clean sweep. Even before the Revolution, which may be taken as the outward sign of an inward decay, it was no longer possible to think,

act, write, or paint as if the old forms still had life. The critical philosophers of the eighteenth century had destroyed their dwelling place. The next generation must build or perish. (14)

Where Neo-Classicism sought to revive the ancient past by uncovering its formal remnants, Romanticism struggled to innovate new forms in the presence of old ones. The nature of this problem regarding past forms and future creativity is key to understanding the complex transition from Neo-Classical attitudes into Romantic ones. Romanticism reacted not against the fundamental aims and focus of Neo-Classical theory, but against the resulting outward decay and failures of its artistic output towards the end of the eighteenth century.

Signs of the impotence of Neo-Classical artistic endeavors were present in the city of Rome in the late eighteenth century. In reference to the painter Raphael Mengs' Parnassus ceiling in the palazzo Albani, and the Neo-Classical movement in art, Andrieux writes, "His skillful and cold composition did indeed faithfully state the spirit of the new school, but it fixed its boundaries inexorably. This third renaissance was to be pale and frigid, incapable of creating a fruitful artistic life" (383). Inevitably, "The chills of the neo-classic mark Rome's artistic exhaustion in the period when new ideas were creating tragic difficulties for the Holy See" (Andrieux 384). Andrieux acknowledges that Neo-Classicism did possess new ideas, yet the works based on these ideas failed to inspire praise. By looking at the Neo-Classical movement's deep philosophical roots, the ideas which undergird its artistic output, we understand the disconnect between what the theory advocated and what the artists practiced, explaining why critics such as Andrieux believe Neo-Classicism failed.

Neo-Classical theories of art and literature often exhibit keen philosophical self-awareness, drawing upon theories of nature and imagination that go back at least to René Descartes (1596-1650). Ernst Cassirer gives a reason for this, stating that:

In allen führenden Geistern des Jahrhunderts tritt diese Personalunion zwischen Philosophie und literarisch-ästhetischer Kritik zutage, und bei keinem von ihnen ist sie ein bloßer Zufall, sondern immer und überall liegt ihr eine tiefe und innerlich-notwendige sachliche Union der Probleme selbst zugrunde. (*Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* 368)

(The union of philosophy and literary and aesthetic criticism is evident in all the eminent minds of the century; in no case is it simply an accident; it is invariably based on a deep and intrinsically necessary union of the problems of the two fields of thought.) (Koelln and Pettegrove 275).

One of the central problems with which Neo-Classical theorists and their predecessors were concerned included the binary ontological relationships between nature and imagination, the individual and the society, and the particular and the universal.

Descartes postulated in his *Regulae ad directionem ingenii* (published 1684) that it is only through the understanding of pure concepts that our minds can grasp nature in any reasonable degree of accuracy. Our sensory perceptions, emotions, and imagination are all subjective faculties which are unable to point towards objective laws of nature. Cassirer elaborates:

Denn alles Sein muß, gemäß seiner Lehre, um klar und deutlich gedacht, um in reinen Begriffen erfaßt werden zu können, zuvor auf die Gesetze des räumlichen Anschauens zurückgeführt, muß in ein 'figürliches' Sein verwandelt werden. (*Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* 378)

(For, according to his doctrine, all being, in order to be clearly and distinctly conceived and to be understood in pure concepts, must first be reduced to the laws of spatial intuition; it must be converted into geometrical figures.) (Koelln and Pettegrove 282)

This conception of *mathesis universalis* logically leads to Descartes' elaboration of the idea of *sapientia universalis*. Descartes understood reason to be the single cognitive faculty most suited to developing universal theories which would account for individual phenomenon. His theory of reason (*mathesis universalis*) necessarily allows for a theory of art and literature based on *sapientia universalis*.² For this theory to be valid the following must be true:

Sie darf sich nicht von der Verschiedenheit der Gegenstände leiten und durch sie verwirren lassen, sondern sie muß das Wesen des künstlerischen Prozesses und das Wesen des künstlerischen Urteils in seiner Einheit und seiner eigentümlichen Ganzheit erfassen. Eine solche Ganzheit wird uns, im Kreis der Künste wie in dem der Wissenschaften, nur dort zuteil, wo es uns gelingt, all die mannigfaltigen und scheinbar heterogenen Erscheinungsformen ein und demselben Prinzip zu unterwerfen und sie aus ihm zu bestimmen und abzuleiten. (Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* 374)

(It must not permit itself to be led astray by the diversity of its objects. It must grasp the nature of the artistic process and of aesthetic judgement in its unity and in its characteristic entirety. We arrive at such an entirety in the sphere of arts only when we succeed in reducing the various and apparently heterogenous forms in which the arts manifest themselves to a single principle, and when we determine them by and derive them from that principle.) (Koelln and Pettegrove 279-280)

The application of these concepts directly in the realm of aesthetics was most thoroughly carried out by Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636-1711) in his 1674 work *L'Art poétique* (“The Art of Poetry”). Drawing heavily on Classical precedents such as those established by Horace, Boileau sought to establish a neo-classical approach to literature and art.

While Boileau, like Descartes, believed that we look to nature to find immutable laws which govern beauty and reality (as Boileau puts it, “Rien n’est beau que le vrai: le vrai seul est aimable” ‘Nothing is beautiful except the truth: the truth alone is pleasing’ (109; epistle 9.43; my trans.), he did not advocate for the type of rote repetition of classical precedents which would come to dominate art by the end of the eighteenth century. Cassirer explains:

Was als die eigentliche und wahre Natur des Gegenstandes zurückbleibt, das ist nicht das, als was er sich der direkten Anschauung, dem unmittelbaren Anblick darbietet; es sind vielmehr bestimmte reine Beziehungen (rapports), die er in sich ausdrückt und die sich auf exakte und universelle Regeln bringen lassen. Diese Regeln, die nicht sowohl von einzelnen Gegenständen, als vielmehr von allgemeinen Relationen und Proportionen handeln, stellen daher das Grundgerüst für alles Sein dar: die Norm, von der es nicht abweichen und die es nicht aufgeben kann, ohne eben damit seinen eigentlichen Charakter als Sein, als objektive Wahrheit zu verlieren.

Die klassizistische Ästhetik ist dieser Natur-Theorie und dieser mathematischen Theorie Zug für Zug nachgebildet. (*Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* 380)

(What then remains as the real nature of the object is not that which the object presented to direct perception but certain pure relations which can be expressed in terms of exact and universal rules. These rules, which apply to general relations and proportions, are therefore the fundamental framework for all being. They are the norm from which being

cannot deviate and which it cannot abandon without sacrificing its real character as being, that is, as objective truth.

Classical aesthetics was modeled after this theory of nature and after this mathematical theory point by point.) (Koelln and Pettegrove 284)

The works of Classical antiquity were important for Boileau not because their forms were perfect and therefore ought to have been copied precisely, but because they were created in accordance with laws of nature. Because of this, the works of the ancient Greeks acted as the ideal teacher of both natural law and beauty. These laws determine subsequent creative forms. The forms of Classical art and literature embody the natural laws which determine their existence, but they are not the source of these laws. The truth and beauty of things lay not in subjective experience, but instead in the underlying natural laws which govern all things. According to this formulation, there can be universal laws which support a vast diversity of appearances among individual instantiations of the law.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744), writing only a few decades after Boileau, echoes similar concepts when he writes in his 1732 *An Essay on Man* “Say first, of God above or man below, / What can we reason but from what we know?” (349; epistle 1, sec.1, lines 17-18). Towards the end of the first epistle, Pope answers, “All are but parts of one stupendous whole, / Whose body nature is, and God the soul” (368; 1.9.267-268). Believing that all truth is circumscribed in nature by universal laws we come to understand that “One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right” (371; 1.10.294). As early as 1709, in his *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope specifically connects this philosophy with a theory of art. He says, “Those *rules* of old discovered, not devised, / Are nature still, but nature methodized” (38; lines 88-89). The poem goes on to describe how Vergil’s individuality was constrained by the natural laws which he discovered reflected in the

poetry of Homer. "Nature and Homer were, he found, the same" (41; 135). According to the Neo-Classical critic, all art which adheres to the truth will reflect a common underlying system of aesthetic rules. These rules are reciprocally found in nature, but in the context of natural philosophy we represent the truth with scientific symbols rather than aesthetic symbols. In this way, both science and art reflect a common object.

Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715-80), operating in the same philosophical tradition as Descartes, Boileau, and Pope, framed the issue of knowledge, both scientific and artistic, as based in the symbolical function of language. We read that:

Condillac hat den Zusammenhang von Kunst und Wissenschaft in ihrer gemeinsamen Rückbeziehung auf die Sprache gesehen. Beide sind ihm verschiedene Stufen und Richtungen ein und derselben geistigen Funktion, die sich in der Erschaffung und Verwendung von Zeichen ausdrückt. Die Kunst wie die Wissenschaft setzen an Stelle der Gegenstände selbst die "Zeichen" der Gegenstände, und sie unterscheiden sich nur in dem Gebrauch, den sie von ihnen machen. (Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* 389)

(Condillac saw the connection between art and science in their common relation to language. He looks upon both as different stages of one and the same intellectual function which is expressed in the creation and use of symbols. Both art and science substitute for objects symbols of objects, and they differ only in the use which they make of their symbols.) (Koelln and Pettegrove 291)

It is this relationship to language and symbolism that helps us understand certain aspects of Neo-Classicism such as its insistence on abstract concepts like the golden ratio as they had observed it in works such as *De architectura* by Vitruvius and Vergil's *Aeneis*. Mathematical concepts such

as this become the symbols which stand in for the laws of pure concepts which govern both nature and beauty.

The belief that Greek and Roman art, literature, and architecture operated according to these pure concepts (often geometric laws) brought many to Rome to study the material evidence for themselves.³ Winkelmann reminds us of the essential problem which would be solved by studying the Classical past.

Wenn der Künstler auf diesen Grund bauet, und sich die Griechische Regel der Schönheit Hand und Sinne führen lässet, so ist er auf dem Wege, der ihn sicher zur Nachahmung der Natur führen wird. Die Begriffe des Gantzen, des Vollkommenen in der Natur des Alterthums werden die Begriffe des Getheilten in unserer Natur bey ihm läutern und sinnlicher machen. (38)

(If the artist builds upon this basis and allows the Greek laws of beauty to guide his hand and his senses, then he is on the path that will lead him safely to the imitation of nature. The concepts of the whole and of perfection in nature in antiquity will purify him of the concept of division of nature into parts as we see it and make him more aware of it.)
(Carter 38)

Over time, artists and critics failed to grasp the philosophical arguments of Boileau, Descartes, and Winkelmann, ultimately leading to the development of strict standards for the reproduction of art based on the outward forms of the Classical past. Boileau, saw natural laws as being guides for originality, not as being a pretense for strict laws of imitation.⁴

The same philosophical issues motivating Neo-Classicism continued to preoccupy Romantic philosophers and artists. Their solution, however, was different. Barzun observes that, “As a romanticist, his task is to reconcile the contraries within him by finding some entity

outside himself vast enough to hold all his facts” (56). Neo-Classical theories saw nature as governed by abstract laws of perfection symbolized in Nature. Romanticism believed that the synthetic power which bridged nature and the self, within the self, transcended both. Therefore, no abstract principle unique to one side of the binary relationship, and not the other, could unify the two. The city of Rome will come to form a symbol of that reconciliatory entity for the Romantics.

The publication in 1790 of Immanuel Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (“Critique of Judgement”) applied theories elaborated in his earlier work to the realm of aesthetic judgments. It sought to reconcile challenges derived from the propositions of skepticism by philosophers such as David Hume. The critical concept in Kant is *that truth is derived from the subjective function of cognition, not from the object of perception itself*. That is, we observe *phenomenal* reality through sense perception, but are only able to access the *noumenal* through cognitive faculties such as judgment and intuition. This means that for Kant, the laws of nature are apprehended in a totally different way from what was postulated by Descartes. Cassirer explains:

Wie bei Kant der Gegenstand, als, ‘Gegenstand in der Erscheinung,’ der Erkenntnis nicht als ein Äußeres und Jenseitiges gegenübersteht, sondern durch deren eigene Kategorien erst ‘ermöglicht,’ erst bedingt und konstituiert wird. (*Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen* 102)

(In Kant the object, as ‘object in experience,’ is not something outside of and apart from cognition; on the contrary, it is only ‘made possible,’ determined and constituted by the categories of cognition.) (Manheim 158)⁵

This revolutionary idea was to have far reaching impacts on the literary and artistic practices of the coming decades.

Initially, it was primarily through German philosophers such as the Schlegel brothers at the University of Jena that the ideas of Kant were further articulated and applied to aesthetic theory and disseminated throughout Europe in publications such as the *Athenaeum* (Wellek, “The Concept” 134). Like the leading figures of Neo-Classical aesthetics, the Romantics also see nature as a source of truth and beauty. In his 1800 *Gespräch über die Poesie* (“Discourse on Poetry”), Friedrich Schlegel writes:

Die Fantasie strebt aus allen Kräften sich zu äußern, aber das Göttliche kann sich in der Sphäre der Natur nur indirect mitteilen und äußern. Daher bleibt von dem, was ursprünglich Fantasie war, in der Welt der Erscheinungen nur das zurück was wir Witz nennen. (334).

(The imagination strives with all its power to express itself, but the divine can communicate and express itself only indirectly in the realm of nature. Thus in the realm of appearances, the only thing that remains of imagination is wit.) (Peer, *The Romantic* 16)

The essential difference between this and the theories of Boileau for example, is not their belief that nature reflects truth, but that the observer’s cognitive relationship with nature is fundamentally different. In the same work, speaking on how truth and beauty are apprehended in poetry, Schlegel writes:

Was ist denn nun dieses Sentimentale? Das was uns anspricht, wo das Gefühl herrscht, und zwar nicht ein sinnliches, sondern das geistige....Er läßt sich freundlich locken von sterblicher Schönheit und in sie verhüllen; und auch die Zauberworte der Poesie können von seiner Kraft durchdrungen und beseelt werden.... Er ist ein unendliches Wesen und mitnichten haftet und kelbt sein Interesse nur an den Personen, den Begebenheiten und

Situationen und den individuellen Neigungen: für den wahren Dichter ist alles dieses, so innig es auch seine Seele umschließen mag, nur Hindeutung auf das Höhere, Unendliche, Hieroglyphe der Einen ewigen Liebe und der heiligen Lebensfülle der bildenden Natur.
(333-334)

(Then what is the sentimental? It is that which appeals to us, where feeling prevails, and, to be sure, it is not a sensual but a spiritual feeling.... It cannot be grasped forcibly and comprehended mechanically, but it can be pleasingly attracted by living beauty and veiled in it. The magic words of literature can be infused with and inspired by its power.... It is infinite, and by no means does it cling and attach its interest only to persons, events, situations, and individual inclinations; for the true poet this interest, no matter how intensely it embraces his soul, is still only a hint at something higher, the infinite, a hieroglyph of the one eternal love and the sacred fullness of creative nature.)
(Peer, *The Romantic* 15-16)

This new Kantian orientation towards nature is directly embodied in the Romantic concept of the symbol.

A foundational figure in the development of this new approach to nature and imagination, especially in relation to poetic symbolism, was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832.) It was in his theories concerning biology and poetics according to Kantian principles that an organic metaphor for poetic symbolism was fully articulated. Goethe sees the symbol as being something that must be apprehended by a perceiving mind. Universal laws, as embodied in the symbol, are not self-evident in nature until it has been articulated by the faculties of cognition. “The law appearing in phenomena produces, in the greatest freedom and in accordance with its

own conditions, the objectively beautiful, which must indeed find worthy subjects to grasp it” (Cassirer, “Goethe” 91).

Similar concepts of this new organic, rather than mechanical, view of nature, and its implications for symbolism, are found among all the major Romantic minds of the early nineteenth century.⁶ This Romantic orientation regarding nature arises across linguistic and national boundaries because it is a concept arising from the common problem which all Romantics faced (Barzun). There was a need for a new understanding of imagination in the face of a worn-out mechanistic conception of the individual in relation to nature.⁷ This need was filled by theories such as Goethe’s which saw aesthetic beauty as being a process of cognition in relation to nature, made possible by the principles derived from Kant.⁸

For Romanticism, the symbolical understanding of nature and the individual is often worked out in the context of the relationship between the individual and urban environments. Peer writes, “Nature is alive and, for the artist to be intensely alive, he or she must fuse with that world and attain a highly individualized mystical experience that digs down into the core of reality” (“The Infernal” 2). Peer draws attention to Schiller’s understanding of society in its ideal capacity as being a forum where individuals interlink in order to obtain full personal development by means of aesthetic education. Aesthetic education is uniquely possible in the society or urban space. Peer writes, “In other words, art is the solution to the problem of the individual’s alienation from and in urban space. The power of aesthetic artifacts to bring people together in creative and harmonious ways is a subtle valorization of the city as a Romantic space” (“The Infernal” 2). Peer points out the distinct possibility for the city to function “as both the site and symbol of an inclusionary power fostered by Romantic art, of the insistence that to be Romantic meant not just to be a dreamer, but to be one who faces the developing and powerful realities of the time,

especially the reality of an increasingly urban landscape in Western culture” (“The Infernal” 5). This insight helps us to understand the distinct way in which the city of Rome functioned as suitable binary opposite to the poetic individual in Romantic poetry and art.

Like the Neo-Classicists, who struggled to reconcile the individual with universal laws of nature, the Romantics too found their solution in the city of Rome. However, the Romantics did not seek for universal laws derived from classical precedents, but rather they sought to actualize the processes of their individual imaginative experiences with nature through the powerful symbolism embodied by the Eternal City.⁹ Put another way, “The radically individualized and transcendental orientation of Romantic art actualizes the tension between and possible harmony of city and country” (Peer, “The Infernal” 3).

Having examined certain threads out of which the Romantic symbol emerged as a concept we are properly oriented to examine seminal definitions for the symbol by the key Romantic figures themselves.

II. Canonical Definitions of The Romantic Symbol

A characteristically Romantic definition of the symbol was given by Samuel Taylor Coleridge when he explained that:

The power delegated to nature is all in every part: and by a symbol I mean, not a metaphor or allegory or any other figure of speech or form of fancy, but an actual and essential part of that, the whole of which it represents. (6: 79)

This formulation of the concept is representative of other contemporary seminal definitions in its failure to explicate the mechanism and function by which the tautology comes into being. A second, less readily apparent problem of the definition is that while it succeeds at saying what the symbol is not, rhetorically speaking, it fails to say what it is. There is no clear delineation of

whether the symbol is a visible characteristic of a discreet phenomenon observable within instances of spoken or written utterance, or whether the symbol is a visible or even non-observable aspect of natural objects. His statement clearly states that he is not referring to something whose essence is ontologically *not* a rhetorical device, and yet he does not here fully explain what the alternative would be. From this, it is unclear what the relationship is between the symbol, language, and natural objects.

This has allowed for ambiguity to persist at the heart of a central tenant of European Romanticism, leading Romanticism scholars to hotly debate the nature of the Romantic concept of the symbol. Essentially, Coleridge's statement highlights the type of ambiguity which exists across several important definitions of the symbol, and which has failed to be fully clarified by subsequent Romanticism scholars and critics.

A proper understanding of the Romantic theory of the symbol is dependent upon how the concept is framed. Romantic symbolism refers to a particular category of underlying theories of meaning. These theories are not intended to be justified by an analysis of discreet instances of language, whether in literature, art, or other forms of human communication. Instead, symbolism provides a theory of meaning which justifies a possible ontological framework for all aesthetic forms, rather than an epistemological explication of individual forms themselves. This was the underlying hope of many prominent Romantic poets and thinkers, and it is a problem which remains relevant today for Romanticism scholarship as well as literary criticism more broadly.

The topic of Romantic symbolism is inherently expansive and involves itself with a wide array of philosophical, aesthetic, and literary issues. Notwithstanding, key aspects of Romantic symbolism can be identified in the writings of Friedrich Schelling, Johann Wolfgang von

Goethe, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge that will specifically help us to clarify the ambiguities identified in Coleridge's previously cited statement.

Throughout Coleridge's writings he makes many references to symbolism, often in opposition to notions of allegory. It has been recognized that his statements on allegory and symbolism, their relationship and difference, are often contradictory and incomplete. In investigating three frequently referenced passages on symbolism and allegory by Coleridge there is revealed at minimum a clear distinction between the usage of the term *allegory* and *symbolism* as instances of figural language or rhetorical devices and a different usage of the term *symbolism* which refers not to objects of perception but rather to the function of the human mind in perceiving objects.

Coleridge's disparaging remarks towards allegory in *The Statesman's Manual* in 1816 (Vol. 6, 79) are frequently cited as evidence for his fixation on a distinction between allegory and symbolism as distinct rhetorical usages of language. This passage has caused for confusion to persist in the critical literature in which the idea of Romantic symbolism is derived from a discussion centered around figural language. This orientation of the discussion has led to a persistent belief that the Romantic symbol is defined in such a way that denigrates the imaginative potential of rhetorical devices such as metaphor and allegory.¹⁰

John Gatta, Jr. has demonstrated that when the specific references to allegory and symbolism in *The Statesman's Manual* are interpreted considering the full context of the work, and not in isolation, we discover at least two important implications. The first is that statements on allegory such as the one quoted above are insufficient evidence that Coleridge is disparaging all forms of literary allegory when collated with his extensive writing on allegorical interpretations of scripture which demonstrate a multifaceted view of allegory as an important

literary mode (Gatta 66). Secondly, the passages in question are not essentially concerned with forms of figural language, but rather with forms of thought more broadly due to their resemblance to German formulations of the symbol-allegory dichotomy from which Coleridge was extensively borrowing.

Oriented in this way, we see that “‘Allegory’ is the summarizing epithet that serves to indict a philosophy of static dualism...” and that “‘Symbol’ he invokes as the collective name for all that proceeds from the approved Coleridgean value system: from organicism and the principle of ‘one Life,’ from the Dynamic Philosophy, Reason, and the Imagination” (Gatta 67). If Coleridge’s theory of symbolism is understood improperly as a use of language distinct from metaphor, allegory, etc., then we must face the fact that Coleridge never gives an adequate explanation how such a symbolism would function rhetorically. If the distinction is not based on the differences between types of figural language but rather is a distinction between theories of mind, then it makes no difference whether we know how specific instances of symbolism may function semiotically, because symbolism does not refer to concrete instances of language from the beginning.

The distinction between discussions of figural language and philosophies of mind is complicated by comments made by Coleridge in his 1819 “Lectures on Shakespeare and Cervantes.” To properly address the contradictions in this work a lengthy quotation is merited. In his Seventh Lecture, Coleridge recorded:

...this leads us at once to the Symbolical, which cannot perhaps be better defined, in distinction from the Allegorical, than that it is always itself a *part* of that of the whole of which it is representative—Here comes a *Sail*—that is, a Ship, is a symbolical Expression—Behold our Lion, when we speak of some gallant Soldier, is allegorical—of

most importance to our own present subject, that the latter cannot be other than spoken consciously/ while in the former it is very possible that *the general truth* represented may be working unconsciously in the Poet's mind during the construction of the symbol—yet proves itself by being produced out of his own mind, as the Don Quixote out of the perfectly sane mind of Cervantes—& not by outward observation or historically—/. (The advantage of symbolical writing over allegory, that it presumes no disjunction of Faculty—simple *predomination*). (5.2: 417-18)

The explanation of the “Symbolical” by means of the example of a ship and a sail at the beginning of this quote is frequently marshalled as evidence that Coleridge's thought failed to go beyond the simple explication of synecdoche. Halmi and Wellek both point out that the issue in this and other instances is a result of Coleridge attempting to demonstrate the concept by example. Halmi explains:

To ask what this symbol is or was in actuality is to conflate the concept with the phenomenon and the examples given by the romantics such as this one by Coleridge is of course incapable of demonstrating an underlying concept beyond the common definitions of rhetorical devices. (3)

Wellek clarifies that symbolism approached from the basis of discussing allegory and symbolism as figural language is incapable of sufficiently describing Romantic symbolism. This is because “the examples of symbol would seem to be mere instances of synecdoche, a figure of contiguity from which symbol cannot even develop” because it inverts the modern use of the term symbol essentially subordinating it to allegory as a fragment thereof (*A History* 2: 174). De Man provides a deeper criticism of romanticism in general for its insistence on the supremacy of

symbolism, which he believed ultimately resulted in a belief that all linguistic production functioned by allegory. This point will be discussed in greater depth further on.

The second half of the quote provides useful information for understanding the frame of reference from which Coleridge is talking about symbolism and allegory. He essentially says that the products of language are referred to by the term *allegory*, since the allegorical lion is that which must be referred to consciously, that is *a posteriori*. The faculty of mind out of which those products arise and to which it refers are indicated by the term *symbol*. He explicitly states that the truth embodied by the outward symbol preexists itself as an essential part of the cognitive faculty which forms the symbol. While we see here a distinction between allegory and symbolism based on the distinction between objects of perception and functions of mind, the distinction is ultimately insufficient and unclear due to the reasons already referenced by Halmi and Wellek.

Further evidence that Coleridge uses symbolism to refer to a philosophy of mind unrelated to the limits of figural language is found in his 1825 work *On the Prometheus of Aeschylus*. He writes:

In the Greek we see already the dawn of approaching manhood. The substance, the *stuff*, is philosophy, the *form* only is poetry. The Prometheus is a *philosopheme* and ταυτηγοριχόν (tautegorical): the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and allegory ([ἴ]εροπαίδευμα), though the noblest and most pregnant of its kind. (11.2: 1267-68)

Here, the essential (inner) truth of nature is associated with philosophy, or the intellectual processes of the mind, whereas the external (formal) semiotic symbol of truth is referred to as allegorical.¹¹ This important formulation of symbolism as being a cognitive faculty in the mind of a creator, the inner *philosopheme* codependently represented by the external *stuff* of the

creator, Prometheus, is a truly Romantic understanding of the concept which has been obscured by Coleridge's preceding attempts to give contrasting examples of literary allegory against symbol. His inability to explicate examples of symbolism without reference to traditional synecdoche is a detriment to his philosophy of Romantic symbolism in that he commits the mistake of conflating the concept with the phenomena which the theory of symbolism itself necessarily transcends.

Even though a complex and often contradictory picture of allegory and symbolism is developed throughout Coleridge's work, there is evidence that he makes a crucial distinction between symbolism as a Romantic theoretical construct and symbolism and allegory as instances of figural language.

Coleridge plays a prominent role in contemporary scholarship on the topic of Romantic symbolism (Riasanovsky, Adams, De Man) and due to this emphasis, any complete look at the topic must address him. However, it is important to acknowledge the deep indebtedness which Coleridge's thought has to a variety of central romantic figures in Germany. The derivative nature of much of Coleridge's work has been clearly demonstrated by Rene Wellek. Most relevant for the present study, is the statement that, "We must also realize that many or even most of Coleridge's key terms and distinctions are derived from Germany.... The distinction between symbol and allegory can be found in Schelling and Goethe... and the way in which he links imagination with the process of cognition is also clearly derived from Fichte and Schelling" (*A History 2*: 156). Wellek goes on to say that, "In all the cases cited Coleridge must have had the actual texts in front of him or used detailed notes taken directly from them. It seems to me a matter of intellectual honesty not to credit Coleridge with ideas distinctly derived and even literally transcribed from others" (*A History 2*: 153).¹²

In order, then, to gain a proper picture of canonical formulations of romantic symbolism it is important to correct the critical literature which approaches symbolism directly through the work of Coleridge and provide a more proper reference frame centered on figures like Goethe and Schelling.

Goethe is, like many of his contemporaries, concerned with the allegory-symbolism dichotomy, but in his writing, there are significant implications of a third category of symbolism which is concerned with cognitive process and not with rhetorical language. This category of symbolism is Romantic symbolism. The canonical passages for Goethe's position on Romantic symbolism are found in his *Maximen und Reflexionen* ("Maxims and Reflections"). In the 314th fragment we read, "Das ist die wahre Symbolik, wo das Besondere das Allgemeinere repräsentiert, nicht als Traum und Schatten, sondern als lebendig- Augenblickliche Offenbarung des Unerforschlichen" ("This is true symbolism, where the particular represents the general, not as dream and shadow, but as the living and immediate revelation of the unfathomable"; 520; Stopp 37). The 1113th fragment, published posthumously, elaborates:

Die Symbolik verwandelt die Erscheinung in Idee, die Idee in ein Bild, und so, daß die Idee im Bild immer unendlich wirksam und unerreichbar bleibt und, selbst in allen Sprachen ausgesprochen, doch unaussprechlich bliebe. (638)

(Symbolism transforms an object of perception into an idea, the idea into an image, and does it in such a way that the idea always remains infinitely operative and unattainable so that even if it is put into words in all languages, it still remains inexpressible. (Stopp 141)

In addition to being something other than a figure of speech, as Coleridge has indicated, Goethe has shown that the symbol is inherently dynamic. This philosophically sophisticated theory of symbolism is deliberately anti-systematic and therefore not simple to identify within individual

works of art in the same way we would point out rhetorical usages of metaphor or simile, or traditional notions of allegory.

In Goethe's brief 1805 essay "Symbolik" ("Symbolism") we find a conventional usage of the term symbol in which Goethe designates four categories of symbol. Three of these are articulated by different usages of language and are therefore types of rhetorical devices, and the fourth is mathematical symbolism in which numbers represent ideal and abstract relationships. The first two categories of linguistic symbols are one, symbols "die mit dem Gegenstand physisch real identisch sind" ("which are physically and really identical with the object") and two, symbols "Die mit dem Gegenstande ästhetisch ideal identisch sind" ("which are esthetically and really identical with the object"; "Symbolik" 144; Miller 26). The examples given by Goethe for these first two categories point to types of onomatopoeia in which there is some physiological connection between words and feelings. The third category consists of those symbols which relate objects purely by convention such as through mnemonics. None of these categories give either a new interpretation of symbolic language nor do they articulate a uniquely Romantic view of symbolism. However, the first line of the essay indicates that Goethe understood that there is a limitation in our ability to demonstrate empirically how words *mean*. He says, "Durch Worte sprechen wir weder die Gegenstände noch uns selbst völlig aus" ("Neither things nor ourselves find full expression in our words"; "Symbolik" 143; Miller 26). For a more sophisticated understanding of symbolism which bridges the traditional points of "symbolism" and the more philosophical and Romantic comment from *Maximen und Reflexionen* we must turn to Goethe's *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen* ("The Metamorphosis of Plants") and his *Zur Farbenlehre* ("Theory of Colours").

Goethe may not have acknowledged his role as a specifically “Romantic” figure, but nevertheless he was deeply engaged in the very problems and topics which both gave genesis to the Romantic movement and those which would later come to define it. Goethe’s personal and intellectual friendship with Schiller and his awareness of Kant both highlight his deep involvement with fundamentally romantic concepts.¹³ The connection between Goethe’s thought on metamorphosis and symbolism and his writings on plants and color theory is deftly exposed and articulated in Cassirer’s article “Goethe and Kantian Philosophy.”

Cassirer demonstrates that as Goethe proceeded to theorize about a universal plant from which all individual instantiations of plants in all their variety are derived and as he explored the physiology of the human eye in connection to the phenomena of color, he moved from using the term “symbol” in the traditional context of the symbol-allegory dichotomy to using it as a reference to an underlying theory of life.

Goethe is a sophisticated thinker but was not a systematic philosopher in the sense that Kant is. His ideas remain in many ways intuitive. Some of his most provocative ideas on symbolism are found in his works on scientific topics not directly related to language or literature. For example, when Goethe studies plants and tries to understand their relationship to one another, he uses a symbolical reference frame for understanding. In trying to understand the relationship between individual phenomena (individual plants) he subverts the traditional Aristotelian method of categorizing plants by species, genera, etc. He believes this method, used prominently by Linnaeus, contradicts experience. Plants present themselves as individual phenomena not as generic categories of identical things. Goethe tries to understand them accordingly, not as they might demonstrate similarity in relation to mechanical categorizations, something which is inherently conventional, but rather how they are related in life, that is how do

they come about. In seeking to understand plants by way of how they develop, Goethe arrived at his theory of a universal plant from which all others are derived through a process of metamorphosis. The one thing common to all plants as Goethe observed, was change.

Ein jeder, der das Wachstum der Pflanzen nur einigermaßen beobachtet, wird leicht bemerken, daß gewisse äußere Teile derselben sich manchmal verwandeln und in die Gestalt der nächstliegenden Teile bald ganz, bald mehr oder weniger übergehen.

(*Naturwissenschaftliche* 64)

(Anyone who has paid even a little attention to plant growth will readily see that certain external parts of the plant undergo frequent change and take on the shape of the adjacent parts—sometimes fully, sometimes more, and sometimes less.) (Miller 76)

The process by which this change takes place is what Goethe referred to as the metamorphosis of plants: “...wodurch ein und dasselbe Organ sich uns mannigfaltig verändert sehen läßt, die Metamorphose der Pflanzen genannt” (“The process by which one and the same organ appears in a variety of forms has been called *the metamorphosis of plants*”; *Naturwissenschaftliche* 64; Miller 76). The important distinction is that Goethe seeks to understand plants not by explicating a phenomenon, but rather the laws by which phenomena arise, that is “...die Gesetze der Umwandlung kennen, nach welchen sie Einen Teil durch den andern hervorbringt, und die verschiedensten Gestalten durch Modifikation eines einzigen Organs darstellt” (“...the laws of metamorphosis by which nature produces one part through another, creating a great variety of forms through the modification of a single organ”; *Naturwissenschaftliche* 64; Miller 76). This subtle reorientation of the problem of understanding the relationships between plants makes all the difference in setting Goethe’s theory apart as a theory of living processes rather than a classical theory which mechanistically articulates relationship by convention. As Cassirer points

out, Goethe's genetic view is distinct from the generic view propagated by Linnaeus, which as he says, "It holds that we have understood nature when we have succeeded in arranging it in the pigeonholes of our concepts, dividing it into species and genera, into families, classes, and orders.... According to him (Goethe), what we grasp in this way are only the products, not the process of life" ("Goethe" 69).

An early version of Goethe's theory of symbolism is found in his comments on the primordial plant in a letter to his friend Herder sent from Naples in May of 1787.

Die Urpflanze wird das wunderlichste Geschöpf von der Welt, um welches mich die Natur selbst beneiden soll. Mit diesem Modell und dem Schlüssel dazu, kann man alsdann noch Pflanzen in's Unendliche erfinden, die consequent sein müssen, das heißt: die, wenn sie auch nicht existieren, doch existieren könnten und nicht etwa malerische oder dichterische Schatten und Scheine sind, sondern eine innerliche Wahrheit und Notwendigkeit haben. Dasselbe Gesetz wird sich auf alles übrige Lebendige anwenden lassen. (*Italienische* 346)

(The primordial plant is turning out to be the most marvelous creation in the world, and nature itself will envy me because of it. With this model and the key to it an infinite number of additional plants can be invented, which must be logical, that is, if they do not exist, they *could* exist, and are not mere artistic or poetic shadows and semblances, but have an inner truth and necessity. The same law is applicable to every other thing.)

(Miller 328-329)

The primordial or archetypal plant is for Goethe the symbol in that it is the ideal which articulates the laws of morphology which lead on to all subsequent phenomena. Each phenomenon is at the same time latent in the ideal and understood in reality by reference to it. In

this way the ideal is a symbol of the real in that they are mutually dependent. Goethe himself, as Cassirer shows, referred to the archetypal plant as a symbol.

He called it a symbol. “The fundamental maxim of metamorphosis” says Goethe in a conversation with Chancellor von Müller in July 1830, “must not be interpreted too broadly; if we say it is rich and productive like an ideal, that is the best way to put it.”

And when he sent Zelter, in 1816, a new edition of the *Metamorphose der Pflanzen*, he advised him to take the work only symbolically, and “always to think in reading it of any other living thing that progressively develops itself.” (“Goethe” 76).

Goethe’s formulation then, would identify the symbolic as that process which generates the real from the ideal in a simultaneous and mutually dependent relationship. Goethe’s understanding of the ideal is here directly related to Kant. Cassirer argues:

In Kant’s system an ideal is not, as with Plato, something opposed to experience—something lying outside it and elevated above it. It is rather a moment, a factor in the process of experience itself. It has no independent, isolated ontological existence; it is a regulative principle that is necessary for the use of experience itself, completing it and giving it a systematic unity. (“Goethe” 74-75)

The vital distinction is that the symbol is not purely an abstract concept nor is it a particular phenomenon or instance of the ideal in the real. It is the regulative generative principle simultaneously bridging the real and ideal in experience. It is a human principle. Goethe’s theory of the symbol suffers from the fact that it is never fully articulated in the form of systematic philosophy. We catch glimpses of it in his writing on other topics such as plants, as well as on color theory. In the preface to *Zur Farbenlehre* we read:

Denn eigentlich unternehmen wir umsonst, das Wesen eines Dinges auszudrücken. Wirkungen werden wir gewahr, und eine vollständige Geschichte dieser Wirkungen umfaßte wohl allenfalls das Wesen jenes Dinges. Vergebens bemühen wir uns, den Charakter eines Menschen zu schildern; man stelle dagegen seine Handlungen, seine Taten zusammen, und ein Bild des Charakters wird uns entgegentreten.

(Naturwissenschaftliche 315)

(In reality, any attempt to express the inner nature of a thing is fruitless. What we perceive are effects, and a complete record of these effects ought to encompass this inner nature. We labor in vain to describe a person's character, but when we draw together his actions, his deeds, a picture of his character will emerge.) (Miller 158)

This statement embodies the same relationship between the real and the ideal, or phenomena and law as we saw in the metamorphosis of plants in which an understanding of phenomena is arrived at by bringing together (or symbolizing) particularities under the direction of law or regulative principles. But even Goethe recognizes a certain amount of impenetrability unsolved by his theory of symbolism. In his 1825 essay "Versuch einer Witterungslehre" ("Toward a Theory of Weather") he states:

Das Wahre, mit dem Göttlichen identisch, läßt sich niemals von uns direct erkennen, wir schauen es nur im Abglanz, im Beispiel, Symbol, in einzelnen und verwandten Erscheinungen; wir werden es gewahr als unbegreifliches Leben und können dem Wunsch nicht entsagen, es dennoch zu begreifen. *(Naturwissenschaftliche 305).*

(The True, which is one with the Divine, never permits itself to be known directly; we look upon it only in reflection, in example, symbol, in particular and related appearances;

we become aware of it as incomprehensible life and still cannot renounce the desire to comprehend it.) (Miller 145)

Goethe moves us closer to a picture of uniquely romantic symbol, a creative process bridging the ideal and the real, but fails to explore it in great philosophical depth (at least not systematically) leaving a sense of incompleteness. At its heart, Goethe's theory of the symbol is a theory of reference. The truth is embodied in proper reference (or symbolic relationship) between the self and the other. "If I know my relation to myself and to the external world, I call that truth. And thus every man can have his own truth, and yet truth is still one" (Cassirer, "Goethe" 97).

When we look at Friedrich Schlegel as a major source for Romantic ideology early in the movement's history, we can see an increasing focus on symbolism. Like others, he too often speaks of both allegory and symbolism. Dieckmann has demonstrated how Schlegel progresses from intermingling both words without distinction, to speaking deliberately and consistently about a specifically Romantic form of symbolism. She argues:

Even a cursory glance at the additions Schlegel made in the later version of the *Gespräch* points to an interesting development of Schlegel's ideas on esthetic problems: very consistently the term "symbol" has been added, a term which is rare and quite unimportant in the 1800 version.... Actually, in the 1800 version of the *Gespräch* he used both terms, symbol and allegory, indiscriminately, but in the later version the term 'allegory' was changed to 'symbol.' It is not through Goethe, but rather through Schelling's *Lectures on Art* that Schlegel was led to this change. (276-277)

Since Schlegel, one of the most important figures for developing and disseminating Romantic ideas was crucially influenced by Schelling about Symbolism, it is important to identify what

exactly Schelling said in terms of a new definition of symbolism. In his 1802 *Philosophie der Kunst* (“Philosophy of Art”), Schelling writes:

Diejenige Darstellung, in welcher das Allgemeine das Besondere bedeutet, oder in welcher das Besondere durch das Allgemeine angeschaut wird, ist *Schematismus*.

Diejenige Darstellung aber, in welcher das Besondere das Allegemeine bedeutet, oder in welcher das Allegemeine durch das Besondere angeschaut wird, ist *allegorisch*.

Die Synthesis dieser beiden, wo weder das Allgemeine das Besondere, noch das Besondere das Allgemeine bedeutet, sondern wo beide absolute eins sind, ist das *Symbolische*. (145-146)

(That representation in which the universal means the particular or in which the particular is intuited through the universal is *schematism*.

That representation, however, in which the particular means the universal or in which the universal is intuited through the particular is *allegory*.

The synthesis of these two, where neither the universal means the particular nor the particular the universal, but rather where both are absolutely one, is the *symbolic*.)
(Stott 46)

Hazard Adams points out what has been recognized by other scholars as well, that in this key moment Schelling departs from Kant by arguing for the self-sufficient tautegorical nature of the symbol by synthesis of the particular signifying the universal and the universal signifying the particular in a codependent way.¹⁴

Arguing for a definition of symbolism in which this happens simultaneously raises unique parameters for understanding where meaning is derived. In nature, according to Schelling’s tautegorical symbolism, we find any number of particulars which do not form some

comprehensible whole until cast into a formulation of such by the imposition of universal categories. These categories, however, have no existence or meaning without the individual particulars which formulate them from the ground up. This essentially dissolves the division between the self and the other. They are mutually interdependent. Perhaps they might exist separately in some imagined vacuum of space, but in fact, the relationship between the universal and the particular is simultaneous, it is one. There is in this sense, no ontological distinction between the two, and it is left to the human mind to be the agent which performs the symbolic function of uniting them. Meaning, then, is the ongoing living relationship between the self and nature. Adams deftly clarifies this point, writing:

With Schelling the so called Absolute or idea lies in the intercourse of subject and object, man and nature, though man is really part of nature. Nature without man is unconscious, mere potentiality, but is also the means of bringing about consciousness in man, for without nature there would be nothing to be conscious of. By the same token, without man nature could not rise to consciousness of itself. Schelling does not view this situation from man's point of view only, as does Fichte, who sees nature generated as object by the subject. Rather, man is part of nature and is the necessary subject through which nature as object knows itself. (58-59)

This casting of symbolism does not present a systematic theory of symbolism. It presents a notion of symbolism that requires in depth elaboration. As it stands, the symbol is a vague aspect of Schelling's much more extensive transcendental philosophy and as a distinct concept, the symbol remains in Schelling vulnerable. It is open to devastating critiques by subsequent thinkers which have in fact been undertaken by thinkers such as Paul de Man in particular. After addressing these critiques of the Romantic symbol individually I will argue that the symbol as

the Romantics defined it was a preliminary intuition which would eventually find further development in the work of Ernst Cassirer.

III. The Contemporary Critical Stalemate

Due to the ongoing theoretical contentions about what the Romantic symbol is, the identification of evidence for such a concept among concrete instances of literary or artistic works is fraught with difficulty. For this reason, it has been frequently claimed that the schools of thought concerning the concept of Romantic symbolism must define it as either a theoretical fiction or simply a theological belief. There is a synthetic third approach which avoids the pitfalls of the first two conclusions. This third approach, mediating between the two currently dominant extremes, will more accurately approach an understanding of both what the Romantics meant, and what we can expect to gain from their line of reasoning.

Halmi has demonstrated that scholars tend to either argue that there is no such concept of the Romantic symbol evident in the actual artistic works from the period, and therefore the concept is merely an empty theory, or that the theory of the Romantic symbol is in fact religious in nature, and therefore can be demonstrated as present in literary and artistic works only as a kind of consubstantiation. Both interpretations are based on the fallacy that the theory of the symbol points to a coherent group of observable phenomena manifest in the products of imagination themselves, such as literary or artistic artifacts. If this were true, then by analyzing these artistic works, the theory of the symbol can either be proven or dismissed. In fact, the theory stands independent of the works of art, and is only intended to describe the mental state which bridges the objective phenomena prior to cognition and the imaginative aesthetic products which come post cognition. Once grasped, it is understood that while the Romantic theories of the symbol may have informed their artistic production in ancillary ways, it was never intended

to provide a strict ontic framework for the works themselves. Any understanding of how the individual works function symbolically cannot be justified by applying a grand theory of symbolism to the ontological structure of artistic forms, but rather, by an individual analysis and comparison between the symbols of one work, and the symbols of other works.

A look at a contemporary analysis of Romantic symbolism by literary critic Paul de Man give a specific example of how the Romantic symbol might be construed to exist in a work of poetry, but it will also highlight some important theoretical problems which become latent in the Romantic symbolic project and which have been the source of certain confusion, namely, the ontic fallacy.

De Man claims that the use of poetic language to symbolize natural objects among the Romantics arises predominantly out of a desire to approach more closely the ontological primacy of a natural object using language.¹⁵ This reveals an innate inadequacy in language to convey ontological significance in reference to natural objects due to the conventional structure of language. The basis for his argument is a close reading and explication of a few lines from Hölderlin's elegy "Brod und Wein: An Heinze."¹⁶ His argument pivots on the premise that the language of the poem asserts that such a thing as a flower does exist ontologically (thereby never ceasing to exist, they are eternal or transcendental), whereas poetic words originate anew over and over due to the fact that they are not natural objects, but conventional objects which have no ontological permanence (74). Therefore, the metaphor which claims that words originate (*entstehen*) like flowers, that is being ontologically real they do not originate but are eternal, is misleading. He says, "Il suit que, puisque l'intention de la parole poétique est de prendre naissance comme une fleur, ce langage tend à exclure toute métaphore, à devenir, à la limite, absolument *littéral*" ("It would follow then, since the intent of the poetic word is to originate like

the flower, that it strives to banish all metaphor, to become entirely literal”; 71; 4). He emphasizes this point with another example, claiming that the key symbols used by Mallarmé are meaningful because they have a natural origin rather than a self-sufficient and thereby ontologically independent source of meaning:

Toutes ses images-clefs, la mer, l’oiseau ou l’aile, les saisons, la nuit, le soleil et tant d’autres, ne sont non seulement prises, comme il dit, “au répertoire de la nature” mais elles tirent leur signification profonde de leur qualité en tant qu’objets naturels et terrestres. (76).

(His key symbols—sea, winged bird, night, the sun, constellations, and many others—are not primarily literary emblems but are taken, as he says, “au répertoire de la nature”; they receive their meaning and function from the fact that they belong initially to the natural world.) (9)

De Man goes on to cite further passages by Wordsworth, Rousseau, and Hölderlin, which according to his explication, fail to challenge the ontological primacy of nature and therefore fail to make the Romantic nostalgia for a return to nature anything more than an ultimately doomed enterprise (74). Essentially, the romantics are doomed by what de Man believes is the inevitable tendency for language to deconstruct itself (*abbauen*).

De Man’s argument is important for its explication of imagery as being a kinetic process where words are used to *name*, as well as his detailed description of how a Romantic symbol may work rhetorically. However, I believe that his argument misunderstands how the Romantics themselves believed that imagery in language achieved “naming.” He disregards the fact that Romanticism did not identify the rhetorical Nature of language as being its source of meaning. There are key humanistic elements of language which de Man rejects out of hand.

De Man argues that the key to understanding natural objects and their relationship to poetic words is through understanding their origin. He argues, words originate as something else and natural objects originate only as themselves (that is they do not originate but only have identity, that is existence and essence). Since natural objects originate like themselves, “Elles sont toujours littéralement égales à elles-mêmes et peuvent être définies sans avoir recours à une métaphore” (“They are literally what they are, definable without the assistance of metaphor”; 71; 4). Words struggle to become like natural objects (to do so they must originate like them since origin contains essence) through an effort to banish metaphor and become literal. The problem which words have is that they are the products of consciousness and therefore originate only in terms of difference. That is, they cannot assert any positive existence, but only reveal by means of negation. The natural object however originates not by negation but by means of its actual existence and being. This makes it positive and stable whereas language is negative and volatile. Using this premise, de Man goes on to argue that:

En tâchant de concevoir l’objet naturel en termes de son origine, on se trouve ramené à une notion platonicienne de l’Idée; la quête pour l’Idée, qui trouve son origine dans l’objet naturel, prend comme point de départ la chose terrestre et particulière, le *minute particular* dont parle Blake, et procède ensuite vers l’origine. (72)

(Trying to conceive of the natural object in terms of origin leads to a transcendental concept of the Idea: the quest for the Idea that takes the natural object for its starting point begins with the incarnated ‘minute particular’ and works its way upward to a transcendental essence.) (4-5)

Poetic language then seeks to convey the transcendental principle by means of an epiphany. However, this is a delusion since an epiphany does not have the ability to convey origin but only

permanence, and therefore, the semantic tool of epiphany cannot reveal the transcendental origin of a natural object through language but can only give a false or misleading impression of it once we forget the transcendental nature of the source (72).

This argument is flawed, in part, because De Man assumes that such a thing as a definite natural object exists in the way he defines it. He assumes that a “flower” is a discreet object when in fact it is, ontologically, nothing more than a mental impression of a dynamic organic object. The idea of a flower is itself a σύμβολον (*symbolon*) in the mind of something which exists in nature. Our use of language is therefore necessarily primary to the existence of the natural object since by convention we can articulate references to mental impressions which are themselves emanations from nature. The fact that language operates by difference does not negate the fact that through difference it reveals positive σύμβολον of things which do exist in the mind as apprehended from nature. The precedence for this theory of language is derived from Aristotle’s work in *De interpretatione*, specifically lines 16a 3-8. Its relevance for illuminating a more accurate understanding of the Romantic symbol will be examined in greater depth further on.

The solution to whether poetic language can convey the transcendental source of the natural object lies in understanding a theory for a use of language based on Kant’s concept of synthetic *a priori* cognition. Poetic language aspires to be like natural objects in that it seeks to articulate mental impressions which have a natural relationship with natural objects due to the cognitive function of our brains. Poetic language reflects this process symbolically through signs which are then articulated and assimilated by our imagination as being an actual part of the thing they symbolize, that is process. Poetic symbolism reflects the dynamic process of nature through the projection of fragments which is how nature is perceived all along. Therefore, the task of

poetic language is not to convey universal truth in the sense of its materiality or noumenal reality, but instead it represents the phenomenal reality of nature by engaging our imagination in a process of cognition which serves as the very source of nature according to Kant. It is the human cognitive faculties of reason, imagination, and intuition that together form the universal whole of which the literary or artistic object is a symbolic and actual part. De Man commits the very same materialistic transgression which the Romantics had set out to dismiss in the first place by ignoring the solutions posited by Kant which are not to be found in the materiality of rhetoric but in the spirituality of the human mind.¹⁷ That is, De Man treats the poetic formulations of Hölderlin as simple ontic structures rather than as complex entities defined by a dynamic ontology of becoming.

In another important study, Wimsatt outlines pitfalls that arise when attempts have been made to understand the concept of Romantic organic form. It is common for organic form to be wrongly interpreted as a literal connection between the structure of organic objects and the structure of metaphoric language. This literalism misses the point. He states, “We have been skirting a sophism: namely, the notion that the representation of biological forms in a work of verbal or visual art implies something about the presence of organic or artistic form in that work” (18). This is, he claims, a fallacy which must be acknowledged and set aside in order to approach more directly the central issue of organicism. After detailing the five tenets of organic form among the German Romantics as outlined by Abrams, Wimsatt points out several difficulties including the human mind’s capability of self-involution. It does not operate the way nature operates. According to Wimsatt the poem neither presents biological imagery, nor does “the process of its growth in the mind resemble(s) the growth of a tree” (24). The symbol also does not exist as a tree exists since as Wimsatt points out:

The aesthetic unity is generated by the Kantian *a priori* synthetic idea, the human reason's glorious power of non empirical creative unifying vision. The art work, says Orsini, has indeed, and literally, an organic form, a synthetic unity in multiplicity. The merely physical organism enjoys this character only by metaphoric extension and hence in a less exact degree. Thus he would reverse the usual direction of the metaphor. (25)

In disproving these three types of organic form Wimsatt argues for a loose organic form in terms of structure. He writes:

A doctrine of organicity, if it means an exceedingly subtle, intimate, manifold (and hence dramatic and imaginative) 'interanimation' of parts in a poem, must surely be one of the modern critic's most carefully defended doctrines. Yet if he faces the facts, he will at the same time find the organic structure of the poem, perhaps paradoxically, a notably loose, stretchable, and adjustable kind of organic form. A 'loose' conception of poetic organicism is, in short, what I am arguing for. (34)

The organic form for which he ultimately argues is one which can be studied in terms of structure. It is free of the restrictions of both the "extreme biological analogy" and that of the "*a priori* or transcendental absolute assertion.

Wimsatt's argument against literal interpretations of organic form is convincing, and is in line with the seminal Romantic definitions of symbolism by Goethe, Coleridge and Schelling. However, Wimsatt's argument for a loose organic form in poetic works contradicts his own position by holding onto the notion that the doctrine of organicity is in some way related to structural form, even if only loosely. It is hard to see how, if the poem can articulate symbols using the structure of organic form loosely, it could not also justifiably exhibit a more literal

organic structure as well. Both forms would lie on opposite ends of the same ontological spectrum.

There is no clear formal distinction between loose and strict organic form in Wimsatt. This leaves any deep understanding of Romantic symbolism ambiguous. Since Wimsatt denies us a clear understanding of how organic form exists structurally, room is allowed for the idea that the Romantic symbol must be mystical or theological in nature. That is, the symbol is formal in nature, but its functional principle is not discursively available within the forms as they appear to us.

While both Wimsatt and De Man present theories which make valid points, they both fall into the ontic fallacy. They are unable to define the Romantic symbol apart from ontological explications of poetic form.

IV. Reorientation and Solution to The Ontic Fallacy

Aristotle provides us with the first known attempt to understand language and discreet utterances by predicating that knowledge on a primitive theory of semantic meaning. Aristotle's theory of meaning, in much the same way as the prominent Romantic concepts of symbolism, relies on a theory of mind concerned with reference which precedes any ontological examination of forms.

Before Aristotle and Plato, the discussion of grammar among the Greeks often centered on the skills related to literacy. With Plato, in works such as the *Cratylus*, the discussion moved beyond how to learn the skill of reading and writing and moved into the philosophy of language; what it is, and how it works. Aristotle made important innovations in this area with his attempt to address the basic parts of language in a more systematic way than had been done previously.

Lines 16a3-8 of *De Interpretatione*¹⁸ outline what Aristotle has identified as the basic parts of language as it is used by people to talk about the world. Kahn has said, “The truth is that structure of any given language exhibits various conceptual tendencies, many of them in conflict with one another, and that different philosophers develop these tendencies in different ways. In this sense, a large number of alternative ontologies are ‘latent’ in the language” (*The Verb* 2). This comment, when taken in light of lines 16a3-8 of *De Interpretatione*, raises the question whether the structure of language as put forth in these lines contains a semantic theory of meaning?

By taking a close look at lines 16a3-8 of *De Interpretatione* as well as modern scholarship, it can be demonstrated that Aristotle has given an implied, but limited, semantic theory of meaning predicated on certain ontological assumptions which are then reflected in the language used to create an explicit ontology in the *Categories*. There is a reciprocal relationship between the need for a theory of meaning to understand the ontology of the *Categories* and the type of semantic theory necessitated by Aristotle’s metaphysics.

It is important to note that one of Aristotle’s primary contributions to the theory of language in lines 16a3-8 of *De Interpretatione* consists in his distinction of the several basic parts involved in the phenomenon of spoken language, including how he distinguishes between a word and what it stands for as mediated by the mind (Robins, *Ancient* 18-22). Aristotle’s contributions to an understanding of language are innovative, and along with his predecessor Plato, help to move beyond a prescriptive theory of grammar as the art of writing, into a descriptive understanding of grammar which seeks to understand what takes place when we use language (Robins, *Ancient* 16-17). In the notes to his translation of *De Interpretatione*, specifically lines 16a3-8, Ackrill begins by pointing out the number of difficult questions that are

raised or left unanswered upon reading Aristotle. These include asking what is meant by “affections in the soul” as well as wondering “what is it for a spoken sound to be a ‘symbol’ of something in the mind?” (113). While Aristotle’s theory is not free of error, it is a progressive and innovative step forward.

The theories of language which existed around the time of Aristotle typically approached language as being either significant by convention or significant by nature. Plato, in his work the *Cratylus*, gives a view of this argument from both sides and argues for a position more in line with a naturalist theory of language whereas philosophers such as Democritus and Hermogenes favor a conventionalist theory (Robins, *Ancient* 7). However, it is not until Aristotle that we have someone who clearly delineates the basic elements involved in the use of language to communicate about reality.

When we look at lines 16a3-8 in *De Interpretatione*, we see that for Aristotle, the basic elements of language are (a) an actual thing, (b) a mental impression, (c) a spoken word, and (d) a written mark. Aristotle combines these elements in one of three relationships; “is a likeness of,” “is a sign of,” or “is a symbol of.” It is from these four elements and the three ways in which they are situated in relation to each other, that we can find grounds for a semantic theory of meaning.

In part, the recent scholarly debate concerning lines 16a3-8 of *De Interpretatione* arises from the fact that their discussion of the basic constituent parts of the phenomenon of language appear irrelevant to the remainder of *De Interpretatione* and its treatment of logical propositions (Ackrill). Some scholars, such as Kretzmann, have argued that Aristotle’s purpose here is simply to explicitly state the conventional nature of language. Others such as Modrak are less keen to

dismiss the semantic implications of these lines and argue that we can derive a general but coherent semantic theory for Aristotle when we understand them properly.

In his seminal 1974 article “Aristotle on Spoken Sound Significant by Convention” Kretzmann makes a careful analysis of the different parts of *De Interpretatione* lines 16a3-8, in order to show that they do not contain an argument for a semantic theory either implicitly or explicitly (5). He does not believe that Aristotle is claiming or arguing for any significant natural connection between spoken sounds and actual objects. By doing this, he will show that Aristotle is not presenting a theory of meaning, but rather is simply proving that names, or spoken sounds, are significant by convention which is something that still needed to be explicitly shown at that time (10).

To begin, Kretzmann isolates the four individual elements and three relations from which Aristotle forms his four claims. These claims are that (1) “written marks are symbols of spoken sounds,” (2) “spoken sounds are symbols of mental impressions,” (3) “spoken sounds are (in the first place) signs of mental impressions,” and (4) “mental impressions are likenesses of actual things” (Kretzmann, 4). Once this is done, Kretzmann establishes the assumption that Aristotle meant two different things by the use of the words ‘σύμβολα’ and ‘σημεῖα’ whereas previous commentators such as Boethius combined these words translating them both as ‘*notae*’. He then is able to make clear what is meant by “symbol” in claim (1) saying:

Consider the written mark ‘ἄ-ν-θ-ρ-ω-π-ο-ς’. It is, following claim (1), a “symbol” of the spoken sound of the Greek word for man.... It is neither a symptom nor a nonsymptomatic index of that sound on the basis of a regular natural association of occurrence.... For *x* to be a symbol of *y* is for *x* to be a notation for *y*, to be a rule governed embodiment of *y* in a medium different from that in which *y* occurs. (5)

In making this distinction, Kretzmann can maintain that while spoken words may have a symbolic relationship to mental images, that relationship does not imply a symptomatic connection between spoken words and actual things (Kretzmann 8).¹⁹ When Aristotle's terms are understood according to Kretzmann's interpretation, there is no clear semantic relationship between language and things due to this logical gap. Therefore, the only connection between spoken language and actual things is a conventional one.

Deborah Modrak's more recent contribution to this particular academic conversation differs with Kretzmann regarding his treatment of the term σημεῖον as meaning "symptom" (Modrak, 20).²⁰ Her solution to the question of defining terms is that "By describing the mental state as *pathema* (literally, the result of some action on the mind), Aristotle emphasizes its origin in some antecedent cause. A likely surmise about the origin of these particular *pathemata* is that they are caused by the *pragmata* they resemble" (21).²¹ This way of understanding lines 16a3-8 and its terms argues for a theory of meaning by reference which is based on resemblance (Modrak, 4). This new perspective on Aristotle's theory allows for a more synthetic solution to the problems of language first outlined in Plato's *Cratylus*.

Modrak's argument shows that to associate Aristotle's theory of language with a theory of meaning, we must understand meaning in the context of "actual languages" rather than a theory of meaning applicable to all languages in general. This limits the applications of the theory, but as Modrak argues, Aristotle "...keeps the discussion where he wants it to be, namely, on the use of language as a tool for understanding" (24). According to Modrak, language can represent objects and make claims to truth because:

The association of a particular linguistic sign with a particular meaning is conventional.

The meaning, however, is an intentional state, a *pathema*, that is a likeness of the

extralinguistic object, the *pragma*, to which the intentional state refers. The *pragma* has a definite character and the *pathema* as its likeness shares this character. Meaning is a function of reference. (27)

Modrak's understanding of lines 16a3-8 allows for a more productive investigation into the connection between Aristotle's theory of language and its relationship with ontology because it allows for language to reveal meaning due to its ontological presuppositions in a way that a purely conventional linguistic theory could not.²²

The way in which Aristotle uses language to articulate the ontology embodied in his theory of categories requires the understanding of his semantic theory of meaning. To understand this more clearly it is important to note that for Aristotle, primary substance is the only thing that is, and how Aristotle's argument for this lies in the way he uses language in the *Categories*.

The scholar C. L. Stough points out the special status that Aristotle gives to primary substance and how this reveals an asymmetrical relationship between it and all other secondary categories (266). Stough's article is concerned with the way in which Aristotle's use of language in particular instances in the *Categories* reveals aspects of his ontology that would otherwise remain ambiguous or unclear. She begins by drawing our attention to the special status Aristotle has given to primary substance and the complications that it raises concerning the relationship between primary substance and all other secondary categories. At the center of this problem is the nature and role of both inherence and predication. Stough's argument claims that the primary substance remains autonomous while also being able to be qualified and understood by the articulation of secondary categories which could not exist without the primary substance to begin with (271). Furthermore, she explains:

A secondary substance is no more than a qualification of primary substance (with stress on the restriction ‘not simply’). Species and genera are thus logically derivative, if not ultimately reducible to primary existents.... Species and genera are not autonomous, so their role as subject is not logically (ontologically) primitive. Presupposed by such predications, and making them intelligible, are the primary existents of the categories. In the case of secondary substances the form of their linguistic expression (τὸ σχῆμα τῆς προσηγορίας) conceals ontological structure. (266)

This relationship is logically asymmetrical and through the linguistic construction which Aristotle employs to articulate it, we can derive a more accurate understanding of the ontological status of the different categories than we could otherwise.²³

The argument made by Stough supports other claims made by Rijk when he argues that Aristotle positions primary substance to be ontologically the only thing that is. All other categories are to be understood as modes of talking about substance in its different possible modes of being. Rijk writes:

Thus the list is much more than a mere classification of beings meant to catalogue the things of the outside world according to their kind of being... Instead, it aims to distinguish the different ways in which we can call up *subsistent* beings – indeed the only things there are – for discussion... what is classified is not *things* by themselves, nor *names* by themselves, but *things according to their mode of being* expressed by a categorial designation. (134)

Understanding the *Categories* in this way is only made possible when we accept the type of semantics that is indicated in the opening lines of *De Interpretatione*. For Aristotle to be able to

discuss the ontological nature of things at all, the discourse must be predicated on the assumption that language has meaning, therefore enabling a discussion of things that exist.

Another important implication of this understanding of Aristotle is the acknowledgement that not only does Aristotle articulate his *Categories* with a logical assumption regarding the semantics of language, but the very metaphysics implied by the *Categories* sets forth the type of semantic theory that is needed. If primary substances are the only things that exist, and they are not predicated of anything, then Aristotle will require a semantic theory that reflects such a notion. This is illustrated best by the explication Rijk gives for “the semantics of naming.” Rijk shows that for Aristotle, the ονομα as a one-word expression being representative of something serves semantically to designate a thing for discussion while “syntactically it is a ‘substrate-expression’” (204-205). Names, like primary substance is for nature, are the building blocks of language. Remaining syntactic elements such as verbs exist to qualify and articulate an understanding of individual names. Upon this framework we can form sentences that according to logical propositions can make statements concerning truth about objects or beliefs.

Aristotle’s innovative distinction of the constituent parts of spoken language provides him with an implied theory of meaning which allows for discourse about actual things as explicitly demonstrated in his ontological writings in the *Categories*. The structure of Aristotle’s ontology not only derives its form from his theory of meaning but in a reciprocal manner it demands the very type of semantic theory it needs in order to exist the way it does. Aristotle’s semantic theory of meaning and his ontology reflect each other in a co-dependent relationship, thus showing how that ontology is made possible by a theory concerning the structure of a given language and how it derives meaning.

By looking at Aristotle's arrangement of the relationship between meaning and being we derive a sound framework in which to understand the Romantic symbol. This framework leads us to the work of Ernst Cassirer, in which the original prototype of the concept by the Romantics finds its full systematic development. In Cassirer, the Symbol is the function of becoming which negotiates the polarities between being and meaning. Cassirer avoids the ontic fallacy by defining symbolism as the function of being as a thing distinct from what some may call symbolic form or structure.

Hendel argues that the central issue in Kant's philosophy from which Cassirer builds his Philosophy of Symbolic Forms "is how we are to conceive the *via media* between concept and intuition in the actual construction of specific knowledge by the human understanding" (Manheim 12). Kant gives the following solution in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason):

Nun ist klar, daß es ein Drittes geben müsse, was einerseits mit der Kategorie, andererseits mit der Erscheinung in Gleichartigkeit stehen muß, und die Anwendung der ersteren auf die letzte möglich macht. Diese vermittelnde Vorstellung muß rein (ohne alles Empirische) und doch einerseits intellektuell, andererseits sinnlich sein. Eine solche ist das transzendente Schema. (188; A 137-138, B 176-177)

(It is clear that a third thing must be given which must stand in relation of being of the same sort (*gleichartig*) with the category on the one hand and with the appearance on the other, and which makes possible the application of the former to the latter. The mediating representation must be pure (without anything empirical) and yet not simply *intellectual*; it must at the same time be *sensuous*. Such a thing is the *transcendental schema*.) (Hendel 12)

The *transcendental schema* as formulated here is similar both to Aristotle's articulation of mental images in the mind as well as the tautegorical function of symbolism as proposed by Schelling. "The schema is the uniting 'representation,' the synthetic 'medium' in which the forms of understanding and the sensuous intuitions are assimilated so that they constitute experience" (Hendel 13). If the symbol is positioned as such, then it is not available to the type of ontological understanding that Paul de Man seeks. The function of the symbol is not inherent in the ontological reality of language but is rather a function of the human mind which uses language in relation to nature to speak.

While Cassirer recognizes that "Die Funktion der Sprache – | und ebenso die der Kunst, der Religion usf. – ist und bleibt ein 'Urphänomen' im Goethischen Sinne. Sie 'erscheint und ist,' ohne daß es an ihr noch etwas zu erklären gäbe" ("The function of speech, just as that of art, religion, etc., is and remains an 'Urphänomen' [an irreducible fact], in the Goethian sense. It 'appears and is'; there is nothing more in it still to be explained"; *Zur Logik* 104; Howe 176), this does not abandon the meaningfulness of language to total skepticism. Cassirer goes on to explicate:

Dieses Verzichts bedarf es in der Tat nicht. Aber wir müssen uns allerdings deutlich machen, daß auch die Skepsis ihre Rechte hat.... Es ist besser, auf ein Wissen zu verzichten, als sich ein Problem dadurch aus den Augen rücken zu lassen, daß man sich bei einer Scheinlösung beruhigt. Alle echte Skepsis. Sie erklärt gewisse Fragen für unlösbar, um uns dadurch um so mehr auf den Kreis der lösbaren Fragen hinzuweisen und um | uns um so sicherer in ihm festzuhalten. (*Zur Logik* 104-05)

(Such abandonment is in fact unnecessary. Instead, what *is* necessary is that we continue to remain clearly mindful of the fact that skepticism also has its rightful claim.... It is

better to be without knowledge on some point than to be blind to a problem because we have contented ourselves with an apparent solution. All genuine skepticism is relative skepticism. It denies that some certain questions are genuinely soluble problems in order to be better able to point out those problems which are soluble and in order to get a surer grip on them.) (Howe 177)

From this, we see that Cassirer would not, as De Man did, seek the significance and justification for the Romantic symbol in the analysis of the ontological nature of concrete instances of rhetorical language. The form of language only solves for a small portion of the much larger issue of symbolism.

What is of interest here is not necessarily the detail of Cassirer's philosophy of symbolism, it being far too extensive for the scope of this paper. In this case we are specifically interested in the way Cassirer frames the issue of symbolism. To get a very accurate picture of this, Cassirer must be quoted at length:

Von der Formanalyse führt ein weiterer Schritt zu dem Verfahren, das wir als Aktanalyse bezeichnen können. Hier fragen wir nicht nach den Gebilden, den Werken der Kultur – und ebensowenig fragen wir nach den allgemeinen Formen, in denen sie sich uns darstellen. Wir fragen nach den seelischen Prozessen, aus denen sie hervorgegangen sind und deren objektiven Niederschlag sie bilden. Wir erforschen die Eigenart des 'Symbolbewußtseins,' das sich im Gebrauch der menschlichen Sprache bekundet; wir fragen nach der Art und der Richtung des Vorstellens, des Fühlens, der Phantasie und des Glaubens, auf denen die Kunst, der Mythos, die Religion beruhen. (*Zur Logik* 102-03)

(From the analysis of form we advance to that procedure which we can characterize as *act-analysis*. This is not a question as to the achievements, the works, of culture; nor is it

a question as to the general forms in which they represent themselves to us. Our question concerns the mental *processes* from which they have come into being and whose products they are. What we are looking for here is, for example, the character of that “consciousness of symbols” which makes itself known in the act of human speech; we are inquiring into the manner and orientation of the building of representations, feelings, fantasies, and beliefs in which art, myth, and religion *have their being.*) (Howe 174)

Further on we read:

Denn was hier von uns verlangt wird, ist nicht dies, daß wir der Frage nach dem “Warum” entsagen, sondern daß wir sie an ihrer rechten Stelle anwenden sollen. Was wir hier lernen – und was im Grunde schon die Physik, die Biologie, die Psychologie uns lehren konnte -, ist dies, daß wir die Strukturfrage nicht mit der Kausalfrage verwechseln dürfen und daß wir die eine nicht auf die andere zurückführen können. Beide haben ihr relatives Recht; beide sind unentbehrlich und notwendig. Aber keine kann sich an die Stelle der anderen setzen. Haben wir einmal, auf dem Wege der Formanalyse und mit ihren Mitteln, das “Wesen” der Sprache bestimmt, dann müssen wir auf dem Wege der kausalen Erkenntnis, auf dem Wege der Sprachpsychologie und der Sprachgeschichte, zu erforschen suchen, wie dieses Wesen sich umbildet und entwickelt. Wir versenken uns damit in ein reines Werden; aber auch dieses Werden verbleibt innerhalb eines bestimmten Seins, innerhalb der “Form” der Sprache überhaupt. Es ist demnach “Werden zum Sein,” “γένεσι[ς] εἰς οὐσίαν,” wie Platon sagt. Formbegriff und Kausalbegriff trennen sich also voneinander, um sich um so sicherer wiederzufinden und um sich um so enger aneinander zu schließen. Das Bündnis zwischen beiden kann für die empirische

Forschung nur fruchtbar werden, wenn jeder von ihnen sein Eigenrecht und seine Selbständigkeit behauptet.

Hat man sich dies einmal klargemacht, so erscheint es keineswegs als ein bloßer Agnostizismus, als ein intellektuelles Opfer, das man sich mühsam abringen muß, wenn man zugesteht, daß die Frage nach der Entstehung der Symbolfunktion mit wissenschaftlichen Mitteln nicht lösbar ist. Es besagt nicht, daß wir hier an einer absoluten Schranke unseres Wissens stehen, sondern vielmehr, daß nicht alles Wissen in der Erkenntnis vom Entstehen aufgeht, sondern daß es daneben eine andere Erkenntnisform gibt, die es, statt mit dem Entstehen, mit dem reinen Bestand zu tun hat. Die Aporie entsteht erst, wenn man annimmt, daß die Begriffe von Ursache und Wirkung die einzigen Wegweiser der Erkenntnis seien und daß es dort, wo sie uns im Stich lassen, nur Dunkel und Unwissenheit geben könne. (*Zur Logik* 105-06)

(What it demands of us is not that we give up asking why, but that we apply the question properly. What is to be learned here—at bottom it is what physics, biology, and psychology are all able to teach us—is that we must not confuse the question of structure with the question of cause, that the one cannot be reduced to the other. Each has its limited claim; each is necessary and indispensable; and neither can fulfill the function of the other. Once we have ascertained the “essence” of language by means of the method of form-analysis, we must then attempt to find out, by way of causal knowledge (the way of the psychology of speech and the history of language) just how it is that this essence develops and transmutes itself. In doing so we are wholly concerned with a case of pure becoming; but this becoming remains within the determinate frame of being; for always it remains within that “structure” which is language. As such, it is, as Plato put it,

“becoming within being,” γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν. Here the concept of form and the concept of causality are set apart from each other that they may be more securely reclaimed and in order that they may be all the more closely tied to each other. The union of both can only be fruitful for empirical research if each maintains its rightful place and its independence.

When this is clearly understood, having to concede that the question of the *origin of the symbol function* is not soluble by causal means will, by no means, appear to be a mere agnosticism, an intellectual sacrifice to be exacted at all cost. What it affirms is, not that we stand here at an absolute limit of our knowledge, but rather that knowledge of coming-to-be does not exhaust the whole of knowledge, that next to it there exists *another form of knowledge, concerned not with coming-to-be [nor with passing-away] but simply with duration*. The dead end only makes its appearance when we assume that the concepts of cause and effect are the only guides to knowledge and that where they fail us there can only be obscurity and ignorance.) (Howe 177-178).

From these passages we glimpse the scope of Cassirer’s extensive work on symbolism. The form of a thing is a question of being, but its cause is a question of becoming. We might say that an extensive ontological examination of the form of a symbol can never lead to a discovery of its significance or meaning. The meaning is tied to the cause for its existence, that is, why is the form there. The cause for a form can only be understood in terms of becoming. But, as was demonstrated by Aristotle, becoming (or origination) is not discernible in the ontological nature of the form, it is a question of its semantic value within language. While language is outwardly conventional, its significance is found within a human context and is directly tied to images in the mind which are tied to nature by association. These associations must come to be within the human mind and cannot exist apart from it. This is where De Man falls into the ontic fallacy.

While he states that he is interested in origination, in practice he attempts to identify the origin of how forms come to be by examining their structural ontology. Thus, while he claims to talk about *becoming*, he is in fact addressing *being* alone. For De Man, being is in practice divorced from semantic meaning, which, as Cassirer demonstrates, is a separate category of knowledge concerned with the ontology of becoming. The ontology of becoming for a given form cannot be investigated structurally within language alone but must be rooted in the history of human culture from which its ultimate semantic meaning is derived.

The symbol for Cassirer, then, is necessarily tied to an examination of all things specifically human. This is done by looking at culture. All symbolic forms are in process of becoming and thereby inherently exhibit a dimension of duration. Rather than understand specific forms in terms of ontological existence, we must look at their semantic existence in terms of duration, that is in terms of *becoming*. This is the operative Romantic principle, the principle of becoming, and it is upon this principle that the function of the human mind, a symbolic function, rests, bringing things into view not in terms of ultimate ontological understanding, but rather in terms of ultimate human significance.

Conclusion

We may conclude, then, by remembering that prominent Romantic poets and philosophers including Schelling, Goethe, and Coleridge, articulated deep theories and definitions of symbolism. Significantly, they can be synthesized into a coherent definition. Symbolism refers to the “real;” that is, noumenological correlation between natural objects, and between concepts present in the mind. These cogitative relationships form a symbolic understanding of the world which allows for artistic and aesthetic creation. A definition of symbolism that would not be characteristically Romantic would be any definition that sees

symbolism as being a property of just the human mind, or exclusively the property of the external physical world. Symbolism is a synthesis between the two, and forms a third category, that of the artificial artistic production. It is crucial to understand that Romantic symbolism is a theory of reference. It becomes a semantic theory rather than an ontological classification for artistic production, such as poetry. The work of scholars such as De Man is not without merit since it does articulate in a masterful way some of the inherent ontological limitations of language due to its ultimate conventionality. However, as Adams points out, “Goethe... does not say that an allegory is never a poem, for he is not really talking about poems as discrete existences but about a power of the poet that defines his mental acts” (Adams 55). It is this power of the mind which the Romantics sought to reference in their mature definitions of Romantic symbolism.

NOTES

1. Archeology became a popular discipline in the eighteenth century and Rome was where the ruins were in greatest abundance. For a more in-depth discussion of the eighteenth century's enthusiasm for archeology, especially in the city of Rome, see chapter 2 "Rome, Revolution, and History" (pp. 33-55) in Bosworth's *Whispering City: Rome and its Histories*.
2. Cassirer further elaborates Descartes' concept when he writes, "Er beruht auf dem Gedanken, daß, wie die Natur in all ihren Gestaltungen bestimmten Prinzipien untersteht, und wie die höchste Aufgabe ihrer Erkenntnis darin besteht, dieser Prinzipien habhaft zu werden und sie klar und sicher auszusprechen, so auch die Nebenbuhlerin der Natur, die Kunst, die gleiche innere Bindung aufweist. Wie es universelle und unverbrüchliche Gesetze der Natur gibt, so muß es Gesetze von derselben Art und von der gleichen Dignität auch für die, 'Nachahmung der Natur' geben. Und schließlich müssen sich all diese Teilgesetze einem einzigen und einfachen Grundsatz, einem Axiom der Nachahmung überhaupt, einfügen und unterordnen lassen" ("It is based on the idea that, as nature in all its manifestations is governed by certain principles, and as it is the highest task of the knowledge of nature to formulate these principles clearly and precisely, so also art, the rival of nature, is under the same obligation. As there are universal and inviolable laws of nature, so there must be laws of the same kind and of the same importance for the imitation of nature. And finally all these partial laws must fit into and be subordinate to one simple principle, an axiom of imitation in general"; *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* 375; Koelln and PetteGrove 280).

3. Andrieux points out an interesting implication of the Enlightenment's essentially materialist view of truth in regard to Rome, being that, "The paradox of this time was the fact that the city again became the center of the artistic world in the framework of that modernity whose principles remained profoundly alien to it" (382)
4. We read that, "Die klassizistische Ästhetik hat sich nur bei den unselbständigen Nachahmern, nicht bei ihren eigentlichen geistigen Urhebern, auf den Irrweg verlocken lassen, bestimmte Regeln zur Herstellung von Kunstwerken aufstellen zu wollen; aber sie erhebt allerdings den Anspruch, diesen Auswahlprozeß zu lenken, ihn zu normieren und an festen Maßstäben zu kontrollieren. Sie behauptet nicht, unmittelbar die künstlerische Wahrheit lehren zu können; aber sie glaubt, dem Irrtum wehren und Kriterien des Irrtums aufstellen zu können" ("By its second-rate imitators, not by its real originators, classical aesthetics was led into the error of attempting to establish definite rules for the production of works of art; it does, however, demand control of this process of selection, the right to establish its norms and to guide it by fixed standards. It does not pretend to be able to teach artistic truth directly but it believes it can protect the artist from error and establish criteria for determining error"; Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* 382; Koelln and PetteGrove 286).
5. This has significant implications for language: "so erscheint jetzt auch die Subjektivität der Sprache als keine bloße Schranke mehr, die uns von der Erfassung des gegenständlichen Seins trennt, sondern als sein Mittel der Formung, der 'Objektivierung' der sinnlichen Eindrücke. Die Sprache kommt so wenig wie die Erkenntnis von dem Objekt als einem Gegenbenen her, um es lediglich in sich 'abzudrücken,' sondern sie birgt in sich eine geistige Auffassungsweise, die als entscheidendes Moment in all unsere

Vorstellung des Objektiven eingeht” (“Similarly, the subjectivity of language no longer appears as a barrier that prevents us from apprehending the objective being but rather as a means of forming, of ‘objectifying’ sensory impressions. Like cognition, language does not merely ‘copy’ a given object; it rather embodies a spiritual attitude which is always a crucial factor in our perception of the objective.”; *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen* 102; Manheim 158).

6. While it is true that almost no two Romantic figures shared the same philosophy point by point (as is true at any point in the history of ideas), their similarities were derived, as Cassirer points out, by the fact that, “They all read the same Kant—and yet for each of them he was new and different, because he stimulated and made effective in them different productive forces, forces of an intellectual, moral, and artistic character” (Cassirer, “Goethe” 98).
7. Benfell points out a key facet of why the Romantics thought Neo-Classicism too narrow when he explains “The Romantic poets (Goethe and Coleridge being the most notable examples) disparaged allegory as an artificial comparison, while praising the symbol as a more organic form of figurative language. In this Romantic view, the allegorical narrative has no necessary relationship to its figurative meaning; the author simply imposes it on the narrative. A symbol, on the other hand, has a *necessary* relationship to its figurative meaning...” (804). This further emphasizes that it was not the intentions of Neo-Classicism that were rejected, but it was their materialistic rather than transcendental understanding of how we apprehend truth in nature that was rejected.
8. Cassirer explains the theoretical relationship between Kant and Goethe more fully when he writes, “Windelband hat von Kants ‘Kritik der Urteilskraft’ gesagt, daß in ihr der

Begriff der Goethischen Dichtung gewissermaßen apriori konstruiert werde; daß, was in dieser als Leistung und Tat sich darstelle, in jener aus der reinen Notwendigkeit des philosophischen Denkens begründet und gefordert werde. Diese Einheit von Forderung und Tat, von künstlerischer Gestalt und reflexiver Besinnung wird in der deutschen Geistesgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts nicht gesucht, nicht künstlich hergestellt und vermittelt; sondern sie resultiert unmittelbar aus der einfachen Begegnung, aus dem dynamischen In- und Miteinander ihrer gestaltenden Grundkräfte. Diese Kräfte sind es, die, als sein notwendiges und immanentes Ergebnis, ebensowohl eine neue Grundform der Philosophie, wie eine neue Weise und gleichsam eine neue ‘Dimension’ des künstlerischen Schaffensprozesses aus sich hervorgehen lassen” (“Windelband said of Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* that it constructs, as it were, *a priori* the concept of Goethe’s poetry, and that what the latter presents as achievement and act is founded and demanded in the former by the pure necessity of philosophical thought. This unity of demand and act, of artistic form and reflective contemplation, is not sought after or artificially induced in German intellectual history of the eighteenth century; it results directly from the dynamic interplay of its shaping formative forces. These forces produce, as a necessary and immanent consequence, a radically new form of philosophy as well as a new mode, a new dimension, of the artistic creative process”; *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* 372-73; Koelln and Pettegrove 278).

9. This concept is further emphasized by Peer when he states, “One finds in the literary narratives of Romanticism, all across the linguistic and national frontiers of Europe, the practiced search for a way to Romanticize (make literary) the disparate, even shattered, human experiences that cannot be suggested, let alone grasped, in the erratic narrative of

everyday life. The chief way in which this was accomplished was to make the Romantic narrative self-projective, to enable the artist to achieve ‘self-presentation as its own subject’ (Peer and Parlej 20). Thus we see the key to Romanticism and the narrative impulse; in fact, virtually all facets of Romantic theory and practice can be understood as a titanic attempt to find a *form* for ‘the centrifugal movement of the self and the limiting or centripetal force of the (non-self, or) the world’ (Brown 129)” (*Roman)ticism* viii).

10. Halmi outlines the progression of notions of symbolism up through the twentieth century which were in some way influenced by originally Romantic ideas of the symbol. In these, the symbol is always juxtaposed with allegory in such a way to demean allegory. One example is W. H. Auden’s comment that “...analysis always tends to reduce symbolism to a false and boring allegory” thus devaluing allegory in favor of symbolism (Halmi 2-3).
11. Coleridge’s assertion that the creative mind is tautegorical, being one and the same with the manifestations of truth which it creates, is a unique instance in which the Germans borrowed from him rather than vice versa. That is, Schelling borrowed the term *tautegorical* (tautegorisch in German) from Coleridge (2.2: 1268, footnote 1). However, the underlying concept of the symbol as essentially tautegorical is derived not from Coleridge originally, but from Schelling (Adams 66). Therefore, Coleridge’s original use of the term *tautegorical* comes directly from his understanding of Schelling’s philosophy.
12. In detailing Coleridge’s plagiarism, Wellek is not arguing that Coleridge and his work is of no value but rather that it is a matter of integrity to recognize where certain ideas originated. Of Coleridge he writes, “Coleridge combines the ideas he derived from

Germany in a personal way, and he combines them moreover with elements of the 18th-century tradition of neoclassicism and British empiricism” (*A History* 2: 158).

13. Cassirer quotes Goethe as saying “Kant never took any notice of me, although independently I was following a course similar to his. I wrote my *Metamorphosis of Plants* before I knew anything of Kant, and yet it is entirely in the spirit of his ideas” (“Goethe” 61).
14. Adams elaborates the provenance of this concept when he explains: “As Todorov has observed, following Sorensen, Schelling’s addition of a third element to the Goethean opposition is an appropriation of Kant. But it is different from Kant in that it gives a kind of independent power to the symbol. Schelling’s distinction implies that in the synthesis the symbol does not merely signify but is what it signifies, and he connects this idea in the *Philosophie der Kunst* with the idea of myth as tautegorical, a term picked up later by Coleridge” (66).
15. I cite the original French article “Structure intentionnelle de l’Image romantique” published in 1960. De Man translated his original article into English in 1984 under the title “Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image” with only minor editorial adjustments to the content of the original. The passages I cite are not affected in terms of their meaning and content by the subsequent English translation.
16. The stanza in question is the following:

Tragen muß er, zuvor; nun aber nennt er sein Liebstes,

Nun, nun müssen dafür Worte, wie Blumen, entstehn. (Hölderlin 92)

(First he must suffer; but now he names his most beloved possession,

Now for it words like flowers leaping alive he must find.) (Hamburger 269)

17. Halmi points out an additional shortcoming of de Man's theory in reference to the work of Schelling when he says, "By undermining the logical integrity of his scheme on his own, Schelling thus renders obviously nugatory its value as a contribution to the systematic study of figurative language or of anything else; but he also prompts us to ask whether it was ever intended to be such a contribution. Just here de Man failed to recognize the implication of his own insistence that the symbol can no longer 'be considered a "solution" to the problem of metaphorical diction.'" (16)
18. I use the translation of lines 16a3-8 as given by L. M. De Rijk: "Spoken utterances are tokens (σύμβολα) of 'affections in the soul' [i.e. thoughts], and written marks tokens of spoken utterances. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken utterances. But what these [viz. utterances] are in the first place (πρώτων) significative of – affections in the soul – are the same for all people; and what these affections are 'likenesses' (ὁμοιώματα) of – things (πράγματα) – are surely (ἤδη) the same."
19. Kretzmann explains, "As (3') suggests, the symptom-relation is logically prior to the symbol-relation between spoken sounds and impressions in the mind of the speaker.... Written marks are symptoms neither of spoken sounds nor of mental impressions although, as we have seen, they are symbols of spoken sounds and perhaps indirectly also of mental impressions" (8).
20. Modrak elaborates: "Greek usage and a long tradition of commentary on this passage supports treating σύμβολα and σημεῖα as synonyms here. N. Kretzmann argued against the tradition and urged a distinction between the two. While Kretzmann was surely right to call attention to the conventional connotations of σύμβολον (cf. 16a28), a cautious

attitude should be adopted with respect to his further claim that σημεῖον should be read as symptom in this context. Aristotle's preferred term for signification is σημαίνω, and he frequently uses σημεῖον as a cognate. If words are signifiers of mental contents rather than symptoms of mental states, then these lines do express a semantic theory, however elliptically or inadequately. That this is so is supported by the claim that the mental state resembles (stands in relation of likeness to) the *pragma*" (20).

21. The core logic of this argument is as follows; "Let us canvass all the possibilities if (a) the *pathema* is caused by the object it resembles: (a1) (a) and the object it resembles just is its intentional content; (a2) (a) and the object it resembles is typically an extramental object; (a3) (a2) and the *pathema* is an intentional state, and its intentional object is its cause.... Under (a3), the mental content for which the spoken word stands mediates the relation between the word and the object to which it refers, and the object determines the mental content or meaning. Interpretation (a3) thus has the greatest potential for yielding an adequate semantics. Still there are obstacles" (Modrak, 21)
22. This is made clearer when Modrak says, "These examples suggest that Aristotle's account of signification is concerned with ontological presuppositions in a way that many modern theories of meaning are not.... None of these examples show that a theory of signification is not a theory of meaning as intension supplemented by a metaphysical thesis about the ontological correlates of meaningful terms.... Since, as Irwin recognizes, many of Aristotle's remarks about signification are consistent with the identification of signification with meaning, it seems better to adopt an interpretation according to which the analysis of meaning is an important component of a theory of signification" (Modrak, 26).

23. Stough gives further insight: “A quality is ‘*how (substance is) qualified.*’ This puts an end to the ‘what is it’ question by revealing the type of existent dealt with—by bringing out the logical (ontological) status of a quality (qualification) as a mere modifier of some subject. The relationship between substance and the remaining categories is blurred by rendering all the categories by abstract nouns” (268).

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