

Negotiating Noosphere: Romantic Odyssey Towards Authenticity

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Abstract: Noosphere, or “mind’s sphere,” developed as a philosophical paradigm in the early twentieth century. The Romantic Movement, as this article demonstrates, is inextricably linked to this noosphere, since the movement’s primary goal was to reject the assumed superiority of reason over emotion (both of which are components of the domain of the human mind) and to assign each of them a proper position. The movement was primarily motivated by a rejection of neoclassical ideals of accuracy, order, and reason. The romantic poets put a premium on imagination, sentiments, emotions, experience, vision, dreams, and the unconscious. They preferred emotions to pure rationalistic comprehension of the universe, owing to the former’s purity and spontaneous intensity that had not been obscured by the bars of so-called civilized ‘reason’. Romantic poets envisage an ‘organic and genuine way of life’ that can only be realized via an enlightened state of mind in which spontaneity triumphs over neoclassical artificiality. This paper argues that there has not been enough resource in the field where this relationship between noosphere and the romantic movement has been properly linked up. Thus, this paper closely examines how major romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, and Keats negotiate the aforementioned noosphere poetically as well as philosophically, making exceptional efforts to achieve a better mode of existence and authenticity of living.

Keywords: Romanticism; Noosphere; Reason; Emotion; Authenticity.

Introduction: Noosphere originates from the Greek word *noos* which means “the mind” or “the sense”. It emerged as a scientific concept in 1925. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin coined the word [1]. Geosphere and biosphere are two more related terms to noosphere. They are concerned with the earth and the living organisms of the earth where biosphere is called “the domain of the manifestation of life” [2]. Pierre Teilhard, in his book *The Phenomenon of Man*, summarizes that biosphere is “a simple branch within and above other less progressive or less fortunate proliferations of pre-life” [3]. On the contrary, noosphere refers to “the realm of the mind” [1]. Though the concept is deeply rooted in science, it simultaneously has philosophical and spiritual nature which advocates an inclusive mode of human perception. Noosphere is perceived as a “web of living thought”, “a thinking circuit”, “a planetary consciousness” and a synthesis of the thoughts of all people where the Earth “finds its soul” [1].

Romantic Movement, this paper argues, is intimately connected to the noosphere as the movement started to dismantle the automatic supremacy of reason in Neo-classical period with an aim of exploring “the realm of the mind” where the components are imagination, memories, dreams, reveries etc. Undoubtedly, Romanticism was a pan-European phenomenon. However, British romanticism will be regarded as the main topic of this study for the sake of this paper's structure. In the tradition of British romantic writers, particularly poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, and Keats (as well as others), there has long been a doctrine where anyone can even now find the fundamentals of several of the romanticism's tenets, and this paper will continue in that tradition, as well. As a result, the poets who have been named above are the authors to whom we have generally made many references throughout this piece.

The article has been divided into two parts. First, it discusses the emergence, development, characteristic features and impacts of Romantic Movement in the Western knowledge system. In the second part, the article shows how the romantic writers negotiate with noosphere or the “mind’s sphere”. Though this notion of negotiating with noosphere is not new in discursive practices, the article makes an attempt to look at the romantic writers from a theoretical frame that has not been done before. Mainly, textual analysis has been done to establish the theoretical framework of this research. Books, journal articles and scholarly discussions are consulted in order to achieve that.

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Origin and Characteristics of Romanticism: The word 'romantic' initially entered the English language in the 17th century. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it originated somewhere about 1659 or thereabouts. In English, it comes from the word 'romanz,' which literally translates as 'romance,' and which was first used in the middle of the 16th century after being imported from French and introduced into English [4]. From ballad to epic, "Knights and their extraordinary journeys" were and are frequently recognized as "Romance" [5].

Contrary to popular belief and literal interpretation, the Romantic Movement was mainly a reaction against the strict adherence to mechanical causes, structures, standards, and objectivity in literature, as well as a rationalistic view of the world. Especially the romantic writers place great emphasis on the subjective experience of the individual, the metaphysical, the mystical and the role of the imagination. They believed that extensive practice of reasoning everything in life and literature corrupts our mind and makes us less sensitive and less responsive to the world that exists beyond the boundary of the material world. That is why nostalgia and the sentiment that the world was better in the past can be found in their poetry. Therefore, a deep desire to walking down memory lane is very much prevalent in all the romantic poets. Professor Ker notes that the term 'romantic' nearly often refers to the human proclivity for recollection. He writes that romantic schools have always been reliant on the past [6]. In a similar spirit, Scott stresses that its most common manifestation is the worship of the 'extinct' [7]. Supporting the notion that romantic poets are intrigued by the past, Lovejoy asserts that the Romantic Movement gained pace because of the desire to return a more sensitive world [8].

Following the Industrial Revolution, the Neo-classical era saw enormous social, cultural, economic, and political upheavals. For example, it saw the mass production of industrial products, the emission of smoke from factories, the development of capitalism, and the emergence of a machine-oriented lifestyle among the populace. These developments also moulded and impacted modern literature, which adhered rigidly to mechanical principles of composition. To demonstrate their independence from technical norms, a new generation of poets began writing poems that were markedly different in form and substance from those of the Neo-classical period. These authors are now referred to as romantic writers.

While the Romantic Movement is an umbrella phrase for literary, philosophical, musical and political movements which are often viewed as a response to the severe intellectualism and rigorous logic of the Enlightenment, it is much more than that. Since Christianity first expanded across the continent during the Middle Ages, it has had a more deep and diverse effect on Europe than any other movement [9]. To escape the confines of population expansion, urbanization, and industrialism, Romanticism sought the exotic, unknown, and distant, transcending logical and Classicist paradigms [10]. Unlike the Enlightenment, which was mostly limited to few elites at the beginning, it changed the "way" ordinary people saw each other, the external world or the natural world, and their interactions. The world and our way of thinking is still influenced by its significantly. It was not, therefore, a single rebellion in favor of passion against reason.

For example, Drabble defines romanticism in the fifth edition of the *Oxford Companion to English Literature* as a fundamental change in sensibility and intellect [11]. It undoubtedly reflected a strong response to the Enlightenment. Politically, it was influenced by the American and French revolutions. It emphasized an intense assertion of the self and the importance of individual experience on an emotional level. It advocated for progressive issues on a social level. Romanticism's aesthetic hallmark is its intensity, and its motto is imagination [11].

Unlike Romantic Movement, no other progressive movement has affected so many aspects of society nor survived so long. Peter believes that the Romantic Movement was the biggest leap forward since the Renaissance. According to him, Romanticism as a literary movement is confronting the 'competent academics' [12]. Clearly, when the romantic writers started out, the Western world was at a crossroads. People took part in revolutionary politics legitimized by the French Revolution.

The rise of creative writing, and therefore the events that happened throughout the movement, were well recorded in history, and the 19th century English Romantic movement was the starting point. According to Frye, the Western

knowledge system has undergone a paradigm change partially due to the influence of romanticism [13]. He feels a disconnect has occurred because he thinks that time's shadow, which he sees on the pages of literary history, has been cast. In his opinion, romanticism (which believed that the universe was created by the Divine Artist) helped to alter the cosmological myth of Western Europe. Kant's notion that things have a "external and superficial" connection to people became powerful enough to define Kant's vision of "things being external and superficial in relation to the knowing subject" [14]. The emphasis on imagination has persisted until our day, and the motto of romanticism still holds today. Thus, our ancient rules and values are going to be defeated by romantic imagination.

Negotiating Noosphere: It is obvious that most romantic writers see the mind, the metaphysical nature of the cosmos, and, most importantly, imagination as the most significant things, while the power of reason and a mechanical perspective of the world are regarded as secondary. The limitless social aspirations of the early 1790s French revolution inspire in early romantic writers a vision of a wondrous period of new beginnings and enormous prospects. They believed that humans had an endless potential to achieve the infinite good. Gene remarks that English Romanticism's nature is truly revolutionary, and it has a sound conception of poetry that is clearly and starkly distinct from the Neo-classical period's poetic conception. [15]. According to him, subjectivism is a component of a subjectivist epistemology, and as such, the mind creates, at least to some degree, what it sees as generating tension as part of that perception.

Several romantic poets claim that the mind has a capacity that allows it to perceive beyond the forms of the earthly world to a higher spiritual truth hidden underneath them. For example, when remarking on one of his own paintings in the 18th century, William Blake talked of such a visionary capacity as being different from the processes of ordinary rationalistic experience of human beings [16].

Abrams examined the difference between what he refers to as the romantic idea of art as expression and the neo-classical perspective of art as imitation [17]. Day adds to Abrams that "it is the lamp that illuminates the world, not the mirror that merely reflects it" [18]. Days correctly believes that it's the characteristic metaphor of the Romantic expressivist view (of the artist and his art) for Abrams to use. [18] As a result, the poet's job shifts from being mimetic to being prophetic. The goal shifts from didactic to evangelistic. This formal principle becomes organic rather than mechanical/imitative, and its ultimate function in poetry becomes the production of the operational truth rather than the depiction of general nature.

Similarly, Samuel Tylor Coleridge concentrates on the spiritual aspect of the mind and emphasizes the significance of its ultimate power in the process of poetry production. The processes of the ultimate union of the mind of an individual and the Mind of the Absolute resolve writing in an idealistic manner. The romantics use the word "imagination" to describe to that portion or capability of the human mind that can comprehend the Absolute. Similarly, the word "imagination" is often employed to define the Absolute. Coleridge described the "primary imagination" as "the living power and prime agent of all human perception" in chapter 13 of *Biographia Literaria*. He mentioned that it is the limited mind's replication of the infinite "I AM's" everlasting act of creation [19]. Its important part is the poet's personal emotions throughout the writing process since it is continuous and the opposite of the neo-classical critics' skillful use of methods to anticipated goals. Coleridge replaced neo-classical norms imposed by poets from outside. The idea that he offers is of a poet who, like a "rare plant," develops following some intrinsic rules [19].

In his essay "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age", Abrams puts his hope on "the mind of the single individual" and compares subject-object relation in romanticism with an ideal or sacred marriage where there is no split. The purpose of art, he continues, is to affect this synthesis of subject and object [20]. In a 1965 essay namely "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric", Abrams asserts that Coleridge supports this view. Coleridge, Abrams writes, did not accept the older philosophical tradition of Descartes and Locke because of their insistence on the "complete separation of the mind and matter which replaced a provincial, vital and companionable world by world of particles in a purposeless movement" [21]. He points out that the methods of reasoning, that lead them to believe in the dualism, have a pervasive tendency of elementalism. In other words, the belief originates from the

notion that all wholes whether it is material objects or ideas are a combination of discrete parts. However, the notion is problematic. Abrams knows Coleridge's emphasis in the *Biographia Literaria*, on the primary imagination shows us that the eternal act of creation is repeated in the binary mind. So, artistic creativity understood by Coleridge, Abram goes on, shares the same nature of Divine creativity [21]. Hence, here we clearly see a remarkable negotiation in the noosphere.

Coleridge and Wordsworth Both express a passionate contempt for society in *Lyrical Ballads*, while extolling the incorruptible nature of Nature. To elucidate his points, Wordsworth publishes a preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* which has evolved into a poetic manifesto or declaration of revolutionary aims. In that piece, he condemns the preceding century's poetic diction and proposes to use materials from every day, real, and common life in "a selection of language really used by man" [22]. Wordsworth's use of ordinary language to address "lowly subjects" breached a key neo-classical canon of decorum, which said that the serious genre should only handle "high subjects" in a sufficiently profound and elevated way. Additionally, Wordsworth asks, "Who is a poet?" and responds, "A poet is a man speaking to man" [22]. He continues to state that the person must possess an "organic sensibility," that enables the poet's intellect to make connections between his poetry and the fundamental elements of human existence [22]. According to Wordsworth, man's salvation or reconnection with nature is sought via imaginative reintegration with nature, not through the socially accepted notion of morality. Here again, we see remarkable suggestions regarding newer negotiations as far as noosphere is concerned.

According to Abrams, the central tendency of explicit theory, which is deeply ingrained in romantic endeavours, is that art is largely "the internal made external" because of an artistic process motivated by the urge of healing and embodies the consolidated product of thoughts and feelings [23]. As an outcome, the poem's main subject matter comes from the poet's own characteristics and deeds. Or, if an objective external condition is given, it is presented in the form in which it is transformed from fact to poetry by the poet's emotions and mental processes. As neo-classical criticism indicates, the primary cause of poetry is not, according to Abrams, "the effect intended upon the audience but instead an efficient cause, the impulse within the poet of feelings and desires in the expression or the compulsion of the creative imagination which like God, the creator, has his eternal source of motion [23]".

Another British romantic poet Keats viewed 'imagination' as a faculty that helps to find the Truth. To Keats, Herford argues "what the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth, whether it existed before or not" [24].

Conclusion: Of course, this romantic ways of upholding emotions and imagination against reason were not without oppositional encounters. For instances, Alan Tate and Brooks have contempt romantic critical theory. Tate attacks it on the grounds that conceive what he considered the contemporary version of "romantic dogma" which maintains that poetry is emotion [25]. Again, Judith Norman reminds us in his arresting article namely- "Nietzsche and Early Romanticism" that Nietzsche, like Goethe, asserts his verdict that romanticism is a form of sickness whereas classicism is really a form of strength and many commentators for the most part accepted this view [26].

Another issue is that this change in emphasis from society and actual politics to the mind of a single person is often seen as egoistic and anti-communal. This article suggests that although the move from community and actual politics to the mind of the single individual may seem to some to be anti-communal, such confusion is typical in all political and social revolutions. Wordsworth sought refuge in nature and in contemplation of the recesses of his own thoughts. Rather, it is safer to admit that romanticism focuses on the goal of bridging the divide between subject and object, thus establishing a zone in the noosphere.

One could conclude that romanticism steered western thinking toward eastern mysticism. This, Frye argues, may have contributed to mysticism's traditional stigma. That is why many academics and intellectuals labelled romantics as 'escapists.' Frye argues in this respect, citing from the *Bhagavata Gita*, that after the poet has established the means of communication with Nature, it is up to us to build the community of reaction. Krishna assuaged Arjunana's fears by reassuring him that his duty resided in the realm of reality. According to Frye, "the disciplined response understands that romantic descriptions of the magical placement in the castle of the souls are not subjective fantasies

of retreat but visions of the battlefield itself, including nature and humanity" [27]. Thereby romanticism is very well deserving of the name of a significant odyssey towards authenticity of life/living which occludes nothing as foreign.

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