

Title: *Subjective Anti-Subjectivism: Karl Philipp Moritz as a Diagnostician of his Time*

## Abstract

Karl Philipp Moritz's great interest in human psychology was analysed by the critics from different points of view, such as biographical, philosophical, social-historical and psychological. In this PhD dissertation I examine Moritz's interest in psychology from another perspective: the cultural-historical one.

Considering subjectivity not only as a fundamental value but also as a central problem of a cultural system developing at the end of the 18th century from different trends (Pietism, Quietism, *Empfindsamkeit*, Anthropology, etc.), this dissertation interprets Moritz's interest in the individual as an interest in crucial questions resulting from the beginning of a new cultural era and from a new way of thinking.

This dissertation is in three parts. First of all, it analyses Moritz's empirical psychology (*Erfahrungsseelenkunde*) and its basis in tradition and then it highlights Moritz's special position in the discussion of his time.

Secondly, it discusses literary figures in Moritz's works, to point out the affinities and also to underline the differences between Moritz's conception of the individual and that of authors belonging to *Empfindsamkeit*. The features of Moritz's literary figures are absolutely new in his age and they stand for a cultural change. Rousseau's influence on Moritz, in the context of the warm reception of the Swiss philosopher's works in Germany at the end of the 18th century, is one of the basic sources of the new literary representation and of Moritz's view of the individual and of the society of his age. Moritz's reception of Rousseau's *Kulturkritik* is also a fundamental means of interpretation in understanding the affinities between Moritz's conception of the

individual and that of another great writer in the literary spectrum of this age: the young Goethe.

Having analysed the links between Moritz and the young Goethe with regard to Rousseau's criticism, this dissertation moves on to Moritz's psychological novel *Anton Reiser*, which plays a vital role in any study concerning subjectivity. Anton Reiser's *historia morbi*, which is set in the coordinates 'oppression/self-pretence/self-betrayal', shows that the individual portrayed in Moritz's works is the representative of an age of transition that suffers from an overgrown subjectivity.

Thirdly, this study considers the role played by subjectivity in Moritz's aesthetic program. According to Moritz, art must be an anti-subjective sphere. It must be an autonomous but representative symbol for reality and it cannot be reduced to a function of personal subjectivity. This programmatic separation of art and life aims to fight against excessive and pathological subjectivity, which is deleterious for art and for anyone aspiring to be an artist.

In conclusion, this dissertation comes to an apparent paradox: Moritz's empirical psychology, his literary representation and his aesthetic theories are anti-subjective, because they all aim to state and to cure the pathological consequences of subjectivity. However, it's manifest that Moritz's works also result from a subjective culture. My dissertation analyses the basis and elaborates in a systematic way the forms of 'subjective Anti-subjectivism' – a phrase which characterizes Karl Philipp Moritz's works and which is one of the reasons of this author's modernity and of greater and greater interest in his works shown by criticism and readers.