

# Effects of German Romanticism on National Socialist Education Policies: “Steely Romanticism”

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## Abstract

National socialist education policies put into practice between 1933–1945 in Germany, has been under the influence of romanticism, which is one of the important currents in the history of German thought that began in the middle of the 19th century. Such “being under the influence” does not refer to a passive situation, but it rather means intentional “exposure” by Nazi ideologues. The meeting of Romanticism with National Socialism led to the most dramatic scenes of the history. Educational institutions, where the victims of war were trained, bipartitely fulfilled the task assigned to them regarding to ideological instrumentalism: to destroy and to be destroyed. Putting an end to both their lives own and the lives of others due to this romantic exposure, primary, secondary and higher education students have been the objects of the great catastrophe in the first half of the twentieth century. It will be possible to see the effects of German romanticism, through getting to the bottom of the intellectual foundations of the period’s tragic actions, such as burning books, redesigning the curriculum on the line of National Socialism, and preventing the dissemination of dissenting opinions by monopolizing the press.

This historical research, which is conducted by examining sources like Arendt (1973), Fest (1973), Giles (1985), Bartoletti (2005), Herf (1998), Heidegger (2002), Hitler (1938), Huch (2005), Hühnerfeld (1961), Schirach (1967), Pöggeler (2002), Thomese (1923), Zimmerman (1990) aims to reveal in a scientific way that it is necessary to be careful against the extreme romantic elements in the practices of education.

**Keywords:** national socialist education, Hitler, romanticism, steely romanticism

## 1. The Historical Context

The question of “Who has developed the theory of national socialism?” is full of doubts. This theory is based on the various trends and ideas of the history of German thought and culture, especially on the currents that have started in the 19th century and continued in the 20th century. The idea of the supremacy of the northern race constitutes the most daunting, yet powerful “life bond” of German fascism. There were two intellectual sources of national socialism: The first source is the French Count Gobineau’s theory of racial doctrine, which is disguised in the scientific theory. According to this theory, the pure race and the Arian men are given the right to dominate and rule over other races. Houston Stewart Chamberlain has also been a supporter of this theory and a spokesperson for a unilateral race ideology (Note 1). The second source is Romanticism and Nationalism. From 1890 to 1933, these two currents eerily intertwined in the heart of the German bourgeoisie. While Germany has been a country that have valued virtue, education and humanity until those times, romanticism and nationalism have destroyed these values and created deep gaps that have been filled by fascism (Hühnerfeld, 1961).

According to Schlegel, Romanticism is a fantastic representation of the emotional. This intensity of emotion is spiritual, not physical. The fantasy and the internalization are the roots of romanticism. As its name suggests, the feeling of enjoying fantasy got across to the Germans from the Eastern peoples. The influence of the Arabs on the spread of lyricism in Europe has been great. This can be seen in the works of some Italian and Spanish figures such as Cervantes, Caderons, Pulcis, Bojardos, Ariostos. However, it is important to remember that the concept of fantasy is not unique to the East. The French and even the Celts (a German race) also have fantastic features. The mystical rituals of Christianity have had an impact upon the emergence of lyricism in the Middle Ages. The spread of Romanticism in Germany began with the books of French Folk Literature, which have included French romanticism. When we look at the history of European literature, we can see that Romanticism have emerged in a powerful way thrice: In the mid-18th century, in the middle of the 19th century and in the

beginning of the 20th century. The first was led by France, the second by Germany, and the third by England (Thomese, 1923, pp. 1–9).

In the 1920s Alfred Rosenberg, renowned chief ideologue of the Nazis, was the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Völkische Beobachter* (National Observers), the media outlet of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party—NSDAP). He contributed to the spread and development of Nazi ideology with articles he wrote in this newspaper. In his articles, he dealt mainly with German romanticism and racial superiority. He published his book *The Myth of the Twentieth Century (der Mythos des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts)* in 1934 (Zimmerman, 1990; Wolin, 2011; Sherratt, 2013). It can be said that Rosenberg's works have been the strongest evidence regarding the influence of Romanticism on Nazi ideology and leaders.

Carl Schmitt, the jurist ideologist of Hitler and Nazism and the author of *Political Romanticism* wrote an article in a regional national socialist newspaper on book-burning incidents emerged on 10 May 1933 throughout Germany and expressed his happiness for such incidents. Saying that writing books in German language would not make someone a pure German, he made it clear that the authors whose books should be read must be pure German blood. Newspaper articles, aiming perception management regarding to the validity of the laws enacted by Nazi power, have had significant effects in the intellectual and academic environment (Sauder, 1983, pp. 175–182; Giles, 1985, p. 162; Steinweis, 2009; Schmitt, 2007). A hundred years before these incidents, the famous German poet Heinrich Heine (d. 1856), whose books have also burnt, have put the following words in Hassan's mouth, in his tragedy book named *Al Mansor* (1823): "*It was just a rehearsal. Where books are burned, in the end, people will also be burned*" (Heine, 2013).

## 2. The Relationship Between Romanticism and Politics

Saying that romantic temperaments are non-political, Huch emphasized that romanticism enables the external formation of life which ensures man to be seen as an interior within the family, society and state. Nevertheless, he said that politics put romantics in the middle of street incidents and chaos. The Romantics, who had nothing to do with the daily hustles and bustles of the politics, have been strongly and passionately involved in politics when it comes to personalities or nationality. They said that human beings can reach the nature, not by going back, but by going forward, and not by elimination of cultural achievements, but by deepening culture, i.e., bringing culture and nature together. Like the bare fact of life that everyone wants children to maintain their purity, romantic politics wanted to preserve the traditions of the farmer class (Huch, 2005, pp. 467–476).

We can easily say that there is a relationship between Romanticism and Conservatism and one triggers the other. The findings supporting this argument are frequently encountered in the historical readings (Carmichael, 1962, p. 2). According to Sherratt, a movement of romanticism emerged in response to increasing industrialization in the 19th century (Sherratt, 2013). Whether Conservatism encompasses Romanticism or Romanticism sets the stage for Conservatism, it is a bare fact that emotional and nostalgic had demanded to be turned into an artistic, intellectual and literary trend over time, and education have been affected by this situation. The origins of romanticism should therefore be sought in the pre-Enlightenment values consumed by the Enlightened mind (Carmichael, 1962, p. 1). Romanticism has revealed its reaction to the Enlightenment with its features like an emphasis on intuition (emotion) against the reckless use of reason and on poetry against the prose.

The Romantics were skeptical of the republic, the political government proposed by the French revolution. In a manner of speaking, the conservatizing of romantics has begun by this point. All romantic fantasies and imaginations (Carmichael, 1962), which have previously turned into nationalism and statism during the late romanticism, have turned into authoritarian politics with the Nazis. Romanticism, which originally emphasizes the individual and individualism, became centralized and rationalist in the period of Nazism.

Nazism have been regarding everything that had taken part in life in the wake of enlightenment as degeneration and decay of society. During this period, when Nazism has met with enlightenment, romanticism has been the closest artistic approach that Nazism has relied on. Everything from the agitation of Nazi propaganda to the farmer ideology praising rural (village) life shows us the fact that Nazism have followed in romanticism's footsteps. This romantic tradition has also imposed nationalist mysticism (Mosse, 1999, p. 23).

The idea, which was proposing that present era has been out of control and the contributions of mechanics to industrial production and capital have dehumanized and alienated human beings, have been on the basis of romantic reactions to the Enlightenment. All of these discussions were mostly based on the instrumental character of education. Adolf Hitler Schools (AHS) (Note 2) can be cited as an example of educational indicator of such case. These schools, which did not have any academic concerns, assumed to educate students, who get born for serving their country, at the disposal of National Socialism through a curriculum programmed entirely

on physical appearance, value and morality (Orlow, 1965; Pine, 2010). This effect can be seen not only in Nazi elite schools such as AHS, NAPOLA, Ordensburgen, Young Noble Schools, but also in other primary and secondary schools such as Heimschulen, Aufbauschulen, Oberschulen (Karasoy, 2018a; Karasoy, 2018b).

### 3. When Did Hitler Become Romantic?

Hitler's fascism and Heidegger's philosophy had a great common source: German Irrationalism of the 19th century. Great thinkers have taken part in this movement, which have arisen from the Romanticism and the Idealism. Irrationalism possessed a very striking and ignorant dangers within Hitler's thoughts, while extremely subtle and deep dangers in Heidegger's thoughts. Irrationalism, which retreated with the development of natural sciences, returned to German universities with the National Socialist movement. Great thinkers of the period indulged in this current (Hühnerfeld, 1961). In the period of national socialism, the practices such as reducing the course hours and disburdening curricula of two natural sciences (Physics, Chemistry) except Biology, was a reflection of this regress in German schools.

Referring to three main characteristics of Adolf Hitler is important in terms of understanding and interpreting him better: Oratory, leadership and heroism. These three characteristics appear to have a critical and central role in the development and conduct of his personality. His oratory skills were coming from his childhood. In his glorious times, he has manifested these oratory skills from the balcony of the Chancellery building, where his speeches were accompanied by the strong cheering of the Berliner National Socialists filled Wilhelmplatz (Kubizek, 1954; Smith, 1967; Hitler, 1938, p. 3; Kershaw, 1999). Hitler has participated in the interracial struggle in Austria during his school years. In those years, with a group of friends, he has been singing the German National Anthem, which was including the words "*Germany is above everything (Deutschland über alles)*", instead of the Austrian Imperial Anthem, despite the warnings and the punishments. He has spoken highly of his becoming a conservative German nationalist in a very short time (Hitler, 1938, p. 10).

Hitler has become acquainted with theater and opera, when he was 12 years old. In a theater in the capital of Upper Austria, he watched Guillaume Tell, a four-act lyric opera produced by Italian composer Gioacchino Rossini. With his own words, he has given a lot of importance to this opera because it was a source of such a pleasure for him (Hitler, 1938, p. 15). This work of art was adapted from the German romantic poet F. Schiller's work that bears the same name. Guillaume Tell tells the revolutionary resistance of a Swiss national hero, who lived in the 14th century, against the existing rulership. Despite his young age, Hitler's acquaintance with concepts such as rulership, power, resistance, uprising, romanticism at the opera level is important with respect to show that this acquaintance has not only created the lyrical (emotional) structuring of his taste of art, but also influenced his personality development.

One of the philosophers that Hitler liked to refer to was F. Schiller. More famous than Goethe in the late nineteenth century, Schiller was loved and admired by all the Nazis. He was a German nationalist in the strictest sense. The Goethe-Schiller comparison in Hitler's mind is a typical indicator of the change in the history of German education, politics, culture and thought between 1933–1945. Opting for romantic and revolutionary Schiller over devout and reflective Goethe has signified great transformation of Germany (Hitler, 1938; Krell, 1975; Mazower, 2008; McNab, 2015).

After all these narratives, a Hitler portrait can be drawn as follows, by referring to his life until 1919: A lazy life supported by a manic enthusiasm and the energy fed by romanticism, extreme wannabe for the art, lack of realism, and lack of decision-making skills that lies behind the separation of what is good and bad, self-opinionated and narcissist character, zero tolerance, sudden outbursts of anger, fierce hatred for those who create problems, barriers and difficulties for himself (Kershaw, 1999).

### 4. The Ideological Instrumentalism of Potentiated Romanticism

The most important aspect of the nationalist/ethnic (*völkisch*) interpretation of nationalism is its emergence as a combination of Germanic culture and a romanticized point of view. This romanticized view has referred to a Social Darwinian emphasis regarding to the struggle for survival, imperialist ideas, which included the acquisition of a *new living space (lebensraum)* to create a new elite through the *eradication of the Jews (judenrein)*, who are considered the archenemy of the Germanic race, and preserving and reproducing the pure race. (Tröger, 1984; Kershaw, 1999).

According to Wolin, the main reason of the Holocaust was the fact that the cultural superiority of the Jews has turned into an annoying rage and hatred in the middle class called as the petty bourgeoisie (Wolin, 2011). The National Socialist German Workers' Party came to the power mostly through the votes of this petty bourgeoisie. This great pain was inevitable when the intellectual and philosophical weakness of this social mass, which

fascism have surmounted, met with disproportionate romanticism. It is destined that a petty bourgeois only filled with emotional excitement moves like a juggernaut, just like a flood after strong rainfall. Indeed, the fact that the masses destroyed were not only Jews confirms and strengthens this thesis.

The Hitler Youth, aged 14–18 years, was raised in disciplined, physical, military and political upbringing in beautiful barracks built outside the city. Even towards the end of the war, the Nazis' strongest supporters were members of the Hitler Youth. Loyalty and self-sacrifice, which generated through the combination of idealism and youth, forced German youth to follow the Nazi phantasm. These young people, who have been romanticized with German heroic sagas, have served their homeland behind the front. A small German boy, who was wounded during the air strikes, immediately stood at attention when he saw that the German officer have just arrived. His following answer to officer's question regarding his pains, has importance in terms of presenting how the youth has structured through a National Socialist education combined with the romanticism: "I have pain, but it does not matter. Germany must win this war (Blackburn, 1985; Giles, 1985; Eberle & Uhl, 2005)." An afternoon towards the end of the war, Axmann came to Hitler with a frail son of 13 years old. This kid shot the Russian T-34 with an antitank in ambush. He was wearing a safari uniform of German African troops and it was quite large for him. Hitler greeted the boy like a victorious general and saluted him with the Order of the Iron Cross. After this little ceremony, Hitler greeted the child again and sent him back to the hellish war, where the child would continue to fight bravely (Eberle & Uhl, 2005).

The Nazis have used all educational tools and materials to impose their ideology on the students. In this period, story books that were inflaming the lyrical feelings through the anti-Semitic content were drawing attention. Owners of publishing companies have put the latest color printing techniques at the disposal of teachers, students and families in the most remarkable way, in order to print and sell works with such content. No doubt that the most famous publisher was the *Der Stürmer* newspaper and publishing company founded by Streicher. It is seen that not only textbooks used in schools, but also all kinds of publications used in non-formal and in-service trainings are decorated with elements of German romanticism. An example of this is the Nazi Reading Book, which Ernst Krieck made it to be prepared by a large number of Nazi professors and instructors in 1936. The book, called *The Official Handbook for the Education of Hitler Youth*, was offering new models of educational management for Nazi instructors (Childs, 1938, pp. 1–105). This study has aimed to reach Nazi ideology to all students. The handbook was distributed by Hitler Youth as a textbook to seven million students. Schools had to use this book for the education of all students between the ages of 14 and 18. When the contents of the book are examined, it is easy to understand that the education has been a priority issue for building the Nazi ideology. As a reference book, it has helped institutionalization and internalization of Nazism in secondary schools, high schools and universities. This handbook, which consists of 105 pages, bristled with judgments that has loaded the students, teachers and training managers a romantic and emotional feeling that have explained the superiority and legitimacy of the German race.



Figure 1. A photo taken in Berlin in 1934 at the German Youth Day (Day of Potsdam)

Source. Bartoletti, 2005, p. 6.

Figure 1 shows a little boy in the uniform of Schutzstaffel (Guard Union, Protection Squadron [SS]) waving a Nazi salute. This picture of the boy who is estimated to be 3 or 4 years old, shows the scope of the Nazi education policy and its commitment to raising a new generation.

Polish state has started to maltreat and exile its citizens of German origin against Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. This has prompted the Nazis in a state of total brutality. By command of Hitler, *Ethnic German Self Defense Force (Volksdeutscher selbstschutz)*, a civilian power under the supervision of the SS, was established. More than ten thousand Germans, who were between 17 and 45 years old, served in this organization, which was established within a week. Von Alvensleben, the leader of the organization, addressed the mobilized members of the organization as follows: "You are the superior race. Be disciplined. Do not be soft. Do not take pity on anyone. Clear (destroy) everything that is not German (Jansen & Weckbecker, 1992, pp. 488–490)." This organization called *Selbstschutz* massacred thousands of people in Poland. These tragic events manifest that Nazism was such an ideology that have been expecting the young people, some of whom were just 17 years old, to fulfill the order "to kill" by providing them a weapon. It is very clear that what this ideology can produce in the field of educational policies and what kind of human prototype that it has tried to raise in schools.

When the calendars have shown 1944, the German defeat on the Eastern Front caused massive loss. Consequently, throughout the whole Germany, remaining reserves have begun to be collected in order to be activated against the Russian army and another army called *Volkssturm* was established in a mad rush. The troops of this army were formed from adolescents, who were 15–16 years old, and elderly people, who were over 60 years old. Besides, the leaders of the the Hitler Youth (*Hitlerjugend*) have taken place in the command echelon of this army. Hereby, approximately six million poorly trained men with insufficient weapons consisted the last military power of the Third Reich. Especially, *Volkssturm* troops employed on the Eastern Front suffered heavy losses against the Red Army. 175,000 *Volkssturm* soldiers have been unaccounted for since the end of the military war. The number of deaths, on the other hand, is still unknown (Eberle & Uhl, 2005).

On May 26, 1933, a commemoration ceremony for the tenth anniversary of Albert Leo Schlageter, a student of the University of Freiburg, who was shot by the French army in Ruhr for his sabotage against the French Occupation Army in 1923, was held at the University of Freiburg. In his speech to the students at this ceremony organized by the Minister of Physical Education, Heidegger said that Schlageter was a young German Hero who departed his life through the biggest and most difficult of all kinds of deaths (Hühnerfeld, 1961; Zimmerman, 1990; Pöggeler, 2002, p. 172; Heidegger, 2002, pp. 51–52). There are several remarkable points in this scene such as his desire to build a spiritual statue of Schlageter in the minds and hearts of every German student for training a youth that bears the similar identity and prototype with Schlageter. Within this context, his approach regarding to present the subject and aspiration to stimulate the feeling of university youth in line with the Nazi ideology as part of the National Socialist Revolution that will be realized in the future are also attention grabbing.

In the national socialist era, the educational value in interpreting history was tempered to the Nazis, and the formal attitudes lying in its ability, then determined both the actions and the real ideas of the students. The structure of history course has resulted training of the most appropriate teachers for this ideology. Nonetheless, the aim of historical studies has not been the development of thought, scientific criticism or aesthetic appearance. All historical efforts have been made up of a preparation for putting students into a mass action (Childs, 1938; Feiten, 1981; Giles, 1985; Füssl, 1995).

In the national socialist era, strong romanticism was enough to shift even religious emotion and thought. It was believed that potentiated romanticism meets almost all spiritual needs. For this reason, it was tried the need for a religion not to be evoked. In fact, this influence of Nazism is not something well-thought-through and was not turned into a theory. As with most things, these drifted emotions have created such an effect in the society and especially among the Nazis. Accordingly, another example is the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games (Naul, 2002, pp. 15–28). The opening ceremony of the Olympics has been a witness to a show, where symbolism and romanticism were leveraged. Each side of Berlin was equipped with swastika flags. Everything was taped from the critical points, since there was a plan to film Olympics subsequently. There were 110 thousand people in the stadium, and millions of people who could not buy tickets was waiting on the streets of Berlin to see the Führer. After Hitler entered the stadium in glamor and glory, a giant choir of 3,000 people have started to sing the *German National Anthem (Deutschland über alles)*, the *Nazi Party Anthem (Horst-wessel-lied)* and the *Olympic Hymn* (Organisationskomitee, 1937, p. 605; Schirach, 1967, p. 218; Krüger, 1984, pp. 62–63; Riefenstahl, 1993, pp. 200–205).

The Festival of Nations was the first part of the documentary called *Olympia*, which was produced for the 1936

Berlin Olympics (11th Olympic Games) by the German documentary director and photographer Leni Riefenstahl upon Hitler's request. Its introduction part was a lyrical encomium on the athletic actions, naked beauties, youth, strengths, historical references and orderliness that German women and men presented in harmony with plants and animals in the nature. This piece of documentary was implying that when it is gotten to the bottom of the German "race" it would be seen that the Germans are warriors and healthy, beautiful, and unspoiled peoples, who were unaffected by diseases, so that they are like gods and goddesses who lived in Olympus. Now this period was reviving again in the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. This aforementioned historical fantasy enabled the creation and legitimization of works of art that would justify the destruction, war, genocide and murder practices that Nazi Germany have already been preparing to realize. It is noticed that the "athletic-looking ancient warriors" presented in the film were defined as "national symbols", and this was presented through extreme arrangement and romanticism.

The notion of "*steely romanticism*", which was used by Nazi Propaganda Minister Goebbels at the opening of the Berlin Auto Show in February-1939 and later in his article published by *Deutsche technik* in the March-1939 (1939, pp. 105–106), is remarkable. The following passage in the Goebbels' article is noteworthy in terms of presenting the fact that the period being talked about had linked arms with this concept of "*steely romanticism*":

The present age is the age of technology. The rapid pace of this age affects all our lives. There is nothing in the world that is not influenced by this pace. Therefore, we face the danger of modern technology to dehumanize people. National socialism has never opposed the technology. Far from being opposed to the technology, one of the main tasks of national socialism have been to accept it consciously, to ensoul it, to control it, to put it into the service of the people and to bring it into conformity with the cultural level of the people. National socialist public expressions were used to refer to the *steely romanticism* of our age. We live in both a romantic and steel-like age. This age has not lost its spiritual depth. We have discovered a new romanticism, through the implications of modern inventions and new technologies. As national socialists, we know exactly how to see the soulless frame of technology and how to fill it by getting it up to date.

By this definition, indeed, it is understood that Nazism was aiming to produce and cultivate a new human species that will combine the spiritual and technological power, which blesses violence, danger, adventure and beauty (Young, 1997, p. 30; Herf, 1998, pp. 195–196; Zimmerman, 1990). It is understood that this new person was also wanted to be equipped with *steely romanticism*.

### 5. The Relationship Between Romanticism and Language (German)

Hitler has a sense of language that was redolent of romanticism. The German people have raised many thinkers. The German language has the power to re-open the information in order to make it to reach the limits of the displayed. The German language has paved the way for the Germans to plan an expansion towards new countries (Hühnerfeld, 1961).

Badiou, who thinks that the organic link between the "Great German Language" and Nazism was just created subsequently and retrospectively, said that drawing Nazism as a content result of the language put in apple-pie order by German Romanticism is both an objectivist and linguistic fiction (Badiou & Cassin, 2011). He pointed out that the relationship between German language, Nazism and German Romanticism was subsequently coercive and fictional. As a matter of course the assertion that suggests "Nazism was only the result which have put in apple-pie order by German language which have influenced by German Romanticism" is not acceptable. However, this should not mean to refuse or underestimate the influence of this romantic language on the birth and growth of Nazism.

German courses have been designed to adopt a sense of unity, a racial pride, and the Germanism among the students. The irrational (romantic) view of German literature and nationalism have been praised. Eckart's poem called "The Awakening of Germany" have been used to give a feeling of nationalism to children. Many classics have been adapted to the needs of the Nazi regime through verbicides or abridgments. Those did not comply with the Nazi worldview were immediately banned (Klemperer, 2007). The Nazis made a great effort to keep Gerhart Hauptmann, the most famous German naturalist, in the country, because his works was evolved in line with Nazi ideology and then staged in German theaters. Hauptmann, who was 70 years old at the beginning of Nazi rule, was not a figure that can leave the country or fight as an insurgent. Nazi ideologues were debating over that whether Hauptmann's works could serve Nazism, and these discussions have ended with the decision that some of his works to be staged in German theaters (Oshinsky, McCormik, & Horn, 1989, pp. 98–100).

One of Hitler's favorite Nazi words was *vernichtung* (destruction, annihilation, extinction, holocaust). Hitler used this word with reference to Jews in many of his speeches. But all correspondence on this issue was subject



to strict *language rules (sprachregelung)*. Except for the reports written by Einsatzgruppen, no document contains words such as *destruction, elimination, extinction, killing etc.* The cryptonyms determined to be used in the meaning of killing were the words *final settlement (endlösung)*, *evacuation (aussiedlung)*, and *special treatment (sonderbehandlung)*. The word “*Theresienstadt*” have been used for referring to the word “*deportation*” while the words “*residence change*”, “*resettlement*”, or “*labor force in the east*” have been used as a reference to the elderly ghetto where privileged Jews were sent. In Nazism, the rule of language was a crypto in itself. A person who was charged with transmitting a secret information was also given language rules, and so that he was expected to fulfill the order according to these language rules (Arendt, 1973).

## 6. The Relationship Between the Romanticism and the Art

Like previous German romantics, Nazi romantics have stipulated to revive the people’s Greek past along with its architecture, athletics and body-beauty cult, art and social harmony as an authentic model for the radical revival of the West (Zimmerman, 1990).

The themes of the famous German musician R. Wagner, known for his nationalist/ethnic (*Völkisch*) feelings, have been death, betrayal, sacrifice and courage. It is clear that these issues are among the subjects of romanticism. The romantic atmosphere that Hitler found at Wagner was an air that German youth must fill in their lungs. Wagner is one of the primary sources that Hitler have fueled with. Hitler has maintained his metaphysical tension with his works. For this reason, Wagner was representing the prototype of the artist that Hitler wanted to create. The following incident can be cited as an example in terms of showing how romanticism has influenced official relations: The operation, in which Spain’s Franco was supported against the rebels, was named *Magic Fire Operation*. This is recalled the heroic music that Wagner composed for the scene that Siegfried passed through the circle of fire to liberate Brunnhilde in his opera, which Hitler has watched several times since his childhood (Fest, 1973; Preston, 1995, p. 159).

Heidegger has also supported National Socialism with his ideas and works, and so to speak, he has served as an ideologist for National Socialism. During his tenure at the University of Freiburg from 1935 to 1943, he has taught German romantic poets F. Hölderlin and G. Trakl. After the beginning of the World War II by Poland’s invasion of Austria in 1938, Heidegger has concentrated on Hölderlin in his lectures. According to Hühnerfeld (1961), the specific style developed by Hölderlin by assimilating the ancient world culture has deeply affected Heidegger. His romanticism has shown parallelism with the content of National Socialism (Sherratt, 2013). It is very meaningful that he taught Hölderlin’s poem *Remembrance* in his class upon the death of his student at the front in 1941. It is noteworthy that Heidegger was aiming to engrain excitement, enthusiasm and perseverance in German university youth by heroizing his decedent student using Hölderlin’s powerful romantic language. The fact that he has been realizing these from the university chair and using an academic language and procedure is a clear indication of the fact that how the educational environments and curricula has put into the service of the most important concepts of National Socialist Romanticism, such as heroism, death, love of homeland and socialism.



Figure 2. Hitler, when decorating warring children, Berlin, 1945

Source. Bartoletti, 2005, p. 141.

Figure 2 was taken towards the end of the war. It was taken when Hitler, who seems exhausted and worn out, stepped out of his bunker for decorating the members of the Hitler Youth, who have shown heroism to protect Hitler, with the Order of the Iron Cross.

Have the romantic concepts such as death, nihilist, fear, irony, boredom, doubt been effective in terms of the thunderous emergence of National Socialism in 1933? Why not Heidegger have legitimized these concepts, as instigating things for the life, once again, at least in a modern form and in an original way? (Hühnerfeld, 1961).” The curiosity and even longing of the German thought and the German spirit for death were esoterically combined with a nihilism which have been peculiar to “German”. Romanticism has lived on the line of death and nihilism in Germany. This line has never been lost in the history of German thought.

In the period of National Socialism in Germany, Romanticism, Nationalism and Anti-Semitism were intertwined concretely. Many Germans tried to extract a new doctrine from this slurry. Hitler’s admiration for Wagner’s art was full of romanticism. The reason for hostility towards individuality was misunderstood romanticism (Hühnerfeld, 1961).

## 7. Conclusion

In the history of German culture and thought, there has always been a reaction to the “non-German”. It is understood that the Nazis turned this temperament, which has been active in German society for a long time, into a political material for the National Socialist ideology by bringing it together with loss of World War I and German romanticism.

The approach suggested that education was not a right, but just a task has been among the basic views of National Socialist Education. Thus, the National Socialist Education has been a self-seeker and state-run education system implemented via a curriculum which was restructured as a means of social engineering, but not an education system based on epistemological freedom, career and individual demands. The role assigned to the students was to fulfill the duty imposed on them by the National State. Humanity has paid a great cost to learn the fact that potentiated *steely romanticism* and Nihilism, which annihilated all the fields from education to theology, has led to an authoritarian social biologism on a nationalist basis. Hundreds of thousands of students and graduates of Nazi schools lost their lives as a result of the nihilistic education set for to destroy and to be destroyed.

In the period of national socialism, the educational value in the interpretation of history was adjusted according to the policy of Nazi education. The structure of the history course has been suitable for training the most appropriate teachers for Nazi ideology, but the aim of historical studies has never been the development of thought, scientific criticism or aesthetic appearance. All historical efforts have been used as a means of preparing the students for getting into mass action. History education in this period was accepted as the most important tool in instilling *steely romanticism* to students.

Taking advantage of German romanticism, the national socialist revolution has endeavored to create its own language. The concepts created or the new meanings imposed on them have become special and enigmatic carriers of nationalist ideology. In this context, the school books were revised within the framework of Nazi ideals and reprinted with strong interventions in favor of Nazism. Book publishers were also subdued by the state. In this way, any publication against the Nazi ideology have been prevented. Even the printing of books, magazines and brochures of different Nazi organizations has been strictly controlled.

In the period of national socialism, art took shape in the hands of ideology once again. It is understood that during the rule of National Socialism, the elements of German Romanticism were injected into the educational programs and educational administration of the German Schools of all types and levels by the Nazis through quite frail study and the educational philosophy and policies of the period were shaped in this direction.

National socialist education has eradicated and banished people, who have different ethnic backgrounds such as Turks, Romany, Slavs and especially Jews; religious backgrounds such as Jewish, Muslims, Christians, an Jehovah’s Witnesses, political backgrounds such as Communists, Marxists, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats and who are physically different, such as homosexuals, in need of special education and disabled. This was because they were considered as disrupting the purity of German blood and could not serve the Nazi ideology. It is not difficult to see the traces of romanticism within the National Socialist education in this eradication and banishment. The deafening silence of German society against what happened for 12 years has been realized through educational and romantic perception management, which was tied in a knot. Their shouts “For Country” when they were losing and “Germany is above all things (Deutschland über alles)” when they were winning, are the examples of the markers that shows potentiated romantic elements were reciprocated by



society.

It was understood by the bitter experience of German National Socialism that the romantic elements, which were lost their composure, have resulted in nihilism, especially in the mass movements. In the middle of the 20th century, the romantic atmosphere in Germany has led to acts of eradicating and destruction, especially in the educational institutions. From this point forth, instead of potentiated *steely romanticism* of which structure was disrupted, we must build universal principles of self-sacrifice, love, respect and heroism together with the help of “*our own romanticism*”, through educational processes. Researchers should work on “*our own romanticism*”.

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## Notes

Note 1. The British journalist, who has also influenced Hitler. He is also R. Wagner's son-in-law.

Note 2. The Adolf Hitler Schools, which have been planned since the early years of the Nazi administration, were founded in 1937 as the conscious and direct rival of the Napolas (National Political Institutes of Education-Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten). By the approval of Hitler, these schools were founded under the auspices of Robert Ley and Baldur von Schirach, in order to train the political leaders of the future.

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