

Abstract: The end of the eighteenth century is marked not only by the French Revolution and by Napoleonic conquest wars, but also by the presence of two great personalities of German science and culture, Alexander von Humboldt and Carl Friedrich Gauss, who are dominated by the thirst of knowledge and measuring the world, but each in his own way. Gauss is concerned about abstract research, hoping that the development of number theory will offer him the possibility to measure the world, thus knowing it. On the other hand, Humboldt appeals to the empiric and to the immediate experience which gives him the opportunity to examine the world at the life level and everything it stands for, from a biological, cultural and geographical point of view.

As in the case of the human genius, these two great German spirits lead a solitary life, they neglect their family, they despise the others around them, they are cynical, selfish and egocentric, being concerned only with their research and this from the desire to live into an accurate and reliable world, one without error to influence the human existence.

Keywords: Alexander von Humboldt, Carl Friedrich Gauss, knowledge, measuring the world, science, space.