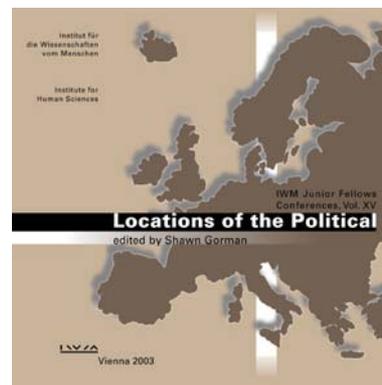


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Towards the Spiritual Renewal of Europe: India in the Early Thought of the Brothers Schlegel

Bradley Herling

Introduction

The grand experiment that is the European Union has obviously focused on various forms of integration, including the economic, the diplomatic, and the legal. The challenge of achieving integration on these fronts has been difficult, but much has already been accomplished. As the experiment has unfolded and expanded, however, there have increasingly been calls not just for pragmatic integration but also for forms of “identification” with Europe as a trans-national entity – and identification *between* the peoples of Europe across local, national, and regional boundaries.¹ This has seemingly led to the thought that the pragmatic side of integration needs to be complemented by a intellectual, or even *spiritual* side, that one of the main functions of Union is to promote a revival of a broad sense of meaning that goes

¹ This call was recently made by Guiliano Amato, Vice President of the European Commission, during the annual Patocka Memorial Lecture, Schwarzenberg Palais, Vienna, on October 29, 2002.

beyond just the pragmatic, in the way that the “Song for the Unification of Europe” binds together highly individualized senses of history, loss, memory, and significance in Kieslowski’s *Blue*.²

For the student of the philosophy of religion (as I am), what this seems to suggest is that a call is being issued to *transcendence* as that which provides unification, identification, and meaning for a disparate group of people. According to some, this would represent a rather clear definition of the *religious*,³ but let us allow for present purposes that this “merely” refers to a broad “intellectual” or “spiritual” sense, playing on the fascinating difficulties associated with the German adjective *geistig*. What does it mean for Europe to call out to a spiritual or intellectual transcendence in order to find union?

As usual, the answers only present further problems, for the call to transcendence (for the sake of identification) is marked in particular by one thing: the *otherness* that is the marker of transcendence itself. Thus the call to identification is inherently split in transcendence: to identify with Europe is immediately to say, “Yes, I am that, but I am not, because I am also this [French, Austrian, etc.]” This can be specified in the arena of the “spiritual,” now thought with its religious connotation. A call to identification through transcendence could go out to the past, the “Christian spirit and tradition” of Europe. That tradition is in no way self-same, however, and (more importantly) is marked by the inherent diachronic otherness of past to present (as in, “Yes, we are that, but now we are also something different”). The challenge of otherness in the call to a transcendent spiritual renewal is even more clear in its synchronic dimension; it is entirely unclear what the transcendent moment might even look like in the present day and age, given the intense sprawl of

² In the final scenes of the late director’s film, for example, the “Song” hovers above the concerns of six characters who have been brought together in the course of the film, offering a common expression of their respective experiences. This is particularly potent in the case of the Juliet Binoche character, who has lost the most and thus has become the most alienated and disenfranchised, but in the end she seems to find a sense of liberation and comfort as the song of Europe soars overhead.

³ This connection has been rather explicit in recent debates among the EU leadership, particularly in light of the pending enlargement of the Union to include Turkey, which has a complex relationship with a non-“Judaean-Christian” religious tradition. Cf. Jörg Wojahn, “*Wie hast du’s mit der Religion?*”, *Der Standard*, 19. November, 2002, 29: “*Die EU – und ihr Reformkonvent – ist...noch auf der Suche nach einem Verhältnis zum Transzendenten...Die Frage, wie ‘christlich’ die EU ist, stellt sich damit nach innen und außen.*”

“spiritual” interests and concerns which thrive across the European demographic.⁴ In thinking the “spiritual” transcendent, perhaps it would indeed be best to think along the lines of Derrida, who wrote back in 1992, “*What is proper to a culture is not to be identical with itself...there is no self-relation, no relation to oneself, no identification with oneself, without culture, but a culture of oneself as a culture of the other, a culture of the double genitive and of the difference to oneself.*”⁵

My own research on the reception of and response to India by early 19th Century German intellectuals has suggested that none of these problems (concerns about “spiritual renewal,” identification through transcendence, and the challenge of otherness) are particularly new. In fact, these types of problems are mapped out rather precisely in the early conceptions of the famous Schlegel brothers (Friedrich and August Wilhelm), who of course were founding members of the Jena Romantic circle. In this brief examination, I will illustrate the way in which Indian “spirituality” played a major role in the Romantic program for renewal, especially by the time of the *Europa* journal (which appeared in 1803).⁶ Discerning the concept of Indian culture and religion which is at work in these texts certainly puts these figures in the ranks of the “positive Orientalists,” who projected and utilized an idealized version of the other to promote internal interests.⁷ Nevertheless, here is a rather

⁴ For example, in my district of Vienna (the 20th), one can take a brief stroll in the early evening and meet (if one is a naively talkative American) the Indian Hindu selling phone cards on Treustraße, a group of Turkish Muslim men talking on the corner of Wallensteinstraße and Staudingergasse, an Austrian Taoist running the first vegetarian Würstel Stand in Vienna on Wallensteinplatz, and a Nigerian Christian having a coke and a “sausage” there. Meeting the widely varied interests (from the economic to the “spiritual”) is the profound challenge of European union.

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 9-10.

⁶ It should be noted from the outset that I do not wish to argue that India was conceived as the *sole* source for Romantic renewal, nor even the primary one. The early Romantic program (inspired in many ways by Herder) circumvented the classical by invoking not only Indian culture, but also the folk traditions of Europe (French, Spanish, Anglo-Celtic) and the Middle Ages. I would argue, however, that India on many occasions took center stage in this program. Part of my project involves specifying these moments. (My thanks to Cornelia Klinger for reminding me of this important point.)

⁷ This group is perhaps most incisively explored by Ronald Inden in *Imagining India* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990). Inden's fundamental argument is as follows: The “positive” approach to India trades on contrasts between European and Indian cultures, where India is thought to be an irrational realm of the imagination. This is reconstructed as a positive thing for Romantics beleaguered by the mechanistic, scientific outlook of modern

clear precursor where renewal in culture is thought to come from that culture not being identical with itself, from the culture being the “culture of the other.”

The Pantheism Icon in Friedrich Schlegel's Interpretive Temple

In 1789, Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel received some terrible news: their brother Karl August, who had gone to India to work, soldier, and explore under the auspices of the British East India Company, had died of disease in Madras. The loss was deeply felt, as is evidenced in youthful poetic writings of August Wilhelm and, almost twenty years later, in Friedrich's memorial and dedication in the introduction to his famous work, *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*. Such sentiments express the deep, almost primordial interior of German Romanticism: *Sehnsucht*, longing for what is lost.

Given this experience it is no surprise that India came to represent something both powerful and attractive to the brothers Schlegel. One does not need to be an orthodox Freudian to acknowledge that the site of a deep loss is often revisited in the imagination, both consciously and otherwise. And both Friedrich and August Wilhelm returned to India again and again in the following decades. This kind of fixation fits rather precisely into a general paradigm for interpreting the European encounter with otherness: it represents a fantasy of the exotic, projected onto an ultimately exterior loss, which in turn becomes authoritative in one's interpretation of the world. Naturally, such fantasies tend towards disappointment when “reality” is ultimately confronted.

This quasi-psychoanalytic reading of the Schlegelian encounter with India certainly has its merits in describing a myth which drives a new kind of cultural encounter, but it tends to isolate individual, personal dynamics in the German encounter with Indian otherness. A strong formulation of this approach is found in the work of Dorothy M. Figueira, who has emphasized reflection on Friedrich Schlegel's personal aesthetic and religious crises in order to disrupt over-blown construction of the Orientalist past.⁸ I am sympathetic with this general aim. But sim-

Europe. Nevertheless, this is still a manner of stereotyping and essentializing Indian culture, such that the agency and identity of its historical actors is effaced.

⁸ Cf. *The Exotic: A Decadent Quest* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 57 and *Translating the Orient: The Reception of Shakuntala in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 206-208. Figueira's reading of Friedrich Schlegel's work on India (and of the 19th C. German encounter with India in general) actually trades on a dynamic identified by Said: early unbridled enthusiasm reverses into intense

ple recourse to the “personal” is not nearly enough to re-stage the Orientalist past more accurately. In actuality, interpretations of Indian otherness are carried aloft by guiding themes which are accepted as significant among intellectual communities through their debates and discussions. Thinking these themes through using some of the tools provided to us by Gadamerian hermeneutics and properly contextualizing with attention to power-oriented myths of India provides an appropriate mediation between the strictly “personal” and Foucauldian (Saidian) fatalism, which suggests discourses of power and knowledge are always already in control.⁹

Thus, in this section of the essay I aim to trace the role of a “discursive icon”¹⁰ which becomes important in the reception of India within Friedrich Schlegel’s thought: pantheism. In the early period, up to and including the writings in the *Europa* journal, this notion entwines itself with Indian “spirituality” and marks the moment indicated above, where otherness is both appropriated and marked as already present at the heart of a program for “spiritual renewal.”

Because of the nature of the “early Romantic” program, it is notoriously difficult to summarize and delineate important themes in a cursory manner. We might cite the “co-presence of the fragmentary and the systematic”¹¹ in the discourse of Jena Romanticism to illustrate this difficulty. In general I wish to characterize Friedrich Schlegel’s theoretical, philosophical perspective during the Jena period in order to establish an account of the iconic, doctrinal role played by pantheism in the local, German reception of Indian sources. In Schlegel’s early thought, pantheism was recast to reflect the Romantic desire for a universal and unifying poetic sense, and India was taken up within this mission.

disillusionment and pessimism. This pessimism is thus projected onto and inextricably linked to the “Orient.” In my view, Figueira herself relies upon an overblown version of this interpretive framework, causing her to make extreme claims which sometimes seem to exhibit pure animus against the figures she investigates.

⁹ It should be noted that Figueira herself has attempted to find a “middle way” between these approaches in her various works but with only varying levels of success.

¹⁰ My term for a notion which marks an interpretive preoccupation of a particular intellectual community. I find that the term is useful 1) for bridging the public “myths” (which intersect with cultural discourses of power in representing Indian sources) and the scholar’s “logos” (the technical, most often philological acquaintance with Indian cultural objects, most often texts) and 2) for emphasizing the “ritual” or “practice” of an interpretive community.

¹¹ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, translated by Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 42.

We can begin at the philosophical epicenter: Kant. Friedrich Schlegel found things to like in the “modern” (Kantian) philosophy – and many more things to dislike. He was a literary, textual critic by expertise and training, and this seemingly led him to a more synthetic view from early on; as Schlegel wrote in one of his fragments, it is “necessary to remember that pure reason alone doesn’t make one educated” (*KA* II, 220; English, 63).¹² At a very basic level, while Kantian philosophy promoted reflection on the modes of criticism to be employed in the search for truth, it would not ultimately allow for a unity of the philosophical and poetic as the mediation of human perfectibility,¹³ and for Schlegel, the *Pantheismusstreit*¹⁴ had surely highlighted the need for such a unity in the face of the stringent and divisive *Aufklärung*.

Philosophers like Fichte, Schelling, and eventually Hegel were to give the instinct about the limits of Kantianism its technical elaboration.¹⁵ But Schlegel had his own philologically informed critique which recasted enthusiasm for Spinozist pantheism and in fact provided the bridge to German Idealism. As a starting point, it may be recalled that Schlegel conceived post-critical philosophy as the “philology of phi-

¹² English translations of Schlegel’s fragments are taken from the volume *Philosophical Fragments*, translated by Peter Firchow (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) and are cited within the text alongside references to the *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, which is cited as *KA* with volume number and page.

¹³ The relationship between Kant and the *Frühromantik* movement is of course highly complex, especially in light of Kant’s teachings in the Third Critique. For a discussion of this relationship, cf. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, 30-33 and 104-106, Steven E. Alford, *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 6-7, and Ernst Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 74-79.

¹⁴ The *Pantheismusstreit* is a dramatic controversy begun in 1783, when Jacobi revealed Lessing’s confession: he was a committed “Spinozist.” Lessing had often been held up to be one of the leading lights of the German Enlightenment, so this confession of commitment to what was essentially an atheistic, amoral doctrine caused a shock-wave. Many resisted the suggestion or rejected Lessing, but many gravitated to the viewpoint Lessing had supposedly advocated and “outed” themselves as also “Spinozist.” The episode is extremely important for the development of post-Kantian German thought, as Frederick Beiser shows in *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1987).

¹⁵ Once again, the exchange between “early Romanticism” and Idealism is a thicket, especially because of the immediate (and intimate) personal contacts which developed between the Schlegel brothers and figures like Fichte and Schelling during the late 1790’s and early 1800’s. For a brief summary of Fichte’s and Schelling’s views during the course of the Jena movement, cf. Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory*, 17-22.

losophy” (cf. *KA II*, 241-242; English, 81-82): “to do any justice” to a philosophical system, “the critic must seek to place himself within the perspective of [it] with the highest level of versatility and universality,” and this required an in-depth philological attention to the history of philosophy.¹⁶ Kant did not pursue this kind of knowledge, and this lack of textualism limited his level of his philosophical attainment. While the contributions of Spinoza had to be honored (“Every philosophy of philosophy that excludes Spinoza must be spurious” [*KA II*, 211; English, 56]), he was guilty of the same omission (*KA VIII*, 58-59). This did not mean that philosophy should be reduced to a review and classification of past thought¹⁷ or that it should give in to the tendency of the age and become merely “critical.”¹⁸ Rather, the philological orientation in philosophy was to remain true to the original (Socratic) philosophical impulse and mission: a love of eternal wisdom in eternal dialogical questioning. The questioning and interpretation of texts, for Schlegel, was the most profound contemporary expression of this spirit, particularly in the deployment of the fragmentary, aphoristic form of response, which was meant to raise the dialogue to the level of art.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ernst Behler, introduction to *KA VIII*, XXVII. Also cf. *KA II*, 236; English, 78: “Every philosopher has his impulsive moments that frequently are real limitations for him, and to which he accommodates himself, etc. Hence those obscure places in a system for the investigator who isolates the system and doesn’t study the philosophy historically and as a whole.”

¹⁷ This is made clear in F. Schlegel’s 1797 critique of a journal of philosophical reviews brought out by Jena philosopher F.J. Niethammer (cf. *KA VIII*, 30-32). Schlegel examines the genre of review itself and wonders whether “every philosopher can once again write something philosophical about every philosophical text.” A reviewer may be able to classify philosophical writings (like a botanist classifying plants), but this activity must also have a “positive” side which determines the “worth” and “inner ground” of the works in question – simple survey and dogmatic refutation are not enough.

¹⁸ “Kant introduced the concept of the negative into philosophy. Wouldn’t it be worthwhile trying now to introduce the concept of the positive into philosophy as well?” (*KA II*, 166; English, 18). Criticism, as another word for “philosophy as philology,” was of utmost importance for Schlegel, but in a way that would “construct [authors and works] genetically in relation to that great organism of all art and all science.” This process would take the text to be an open opportunity for productive interpretation and re-creation, not as “existing, finished, and withered.” F. Schlegel quoted in Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*, translated by S. Heyvaert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 123.

¹⁹ In response to the persistent problem of foundations, and in response to the relentless idealist tendency towards systematicity, Friedrich Schlegel presented a decidedly hermeneutical model of philosophical inquiry: philosophy, “like epic poetry, always begins in medias res” (*KA II*, 178; English, 28). “*Es ist ein Ganzes, und der Weg es zu erkennen ist also keine grade Linie, sondern ein Kreis.*” Quoted in Behler introduction, *KA VIII*, XLIII. Schlegel suggested

The back and forth of textual interpretation was thus to play a fundamental role in Schlegel's early thought. It seems to represent the grounding metaphor for the *Frühromantik* "logic," a more technical expression of which was called for by the expectations of the contemporary intellectual community. As the anti-Kantian tradition would have it, stringent Enlightenment thinking failed to bridge the "ugly, broad ditch" (to appropriate Lessing's phrase) between subjectivity and the world, between the I and the not-I, between identity and difference, between the theoretical and the practical, between the divine and the human. The synthesis between such dualities remained to be thought, and recourse to Spinoza showed the importance and potential of such inquiry. While Fichte was the philosophical champion of a view that extended Kant's views to the point of absolute identity, Schlegel devised his own solution, which took its impulse from the mediating dynamism of imagination and textual interpretation and attempted to fulfill his vision of a great post-Kantian mission: "all art should become science and all science art; poetry and philosophy should be made one" (*KA* II, 161; English, 14).

A reading of Spinoza indeed played a significant role in this mission. As Schlegel writes in the *Athenäum*, Spinoza appears as the "perfect Christian" because, for him, "everything" is a "mediator" (*KA* II, 203; English, 50); put another way, "The scientific ideal of Christianity is to portray God in an infinite series of variations" (*KA* II, 243; English, 82). The sophisticated formulation of a pantheistic, all-in-one doctrine suggests that all things (texts, individuals, etc.) mediate each other, for "no idea is isolated, but is what it is only in combination with all other ideas" (*KA* II, x; English, 102).²⁰ But Schlegel does not wish to conceive this "combination" as a synthetic, systematic unity (as was the case in Spinoza's mathematical form and will come to be the case in Hegel's dialectical "identity of identity and difference"). Dialectical infinitude was indeed seen as organic and coherent, but as a combination of disparate elements – not as a systematic synthesis. To this extent the imagination represented a higher unifying function, but only in its strange power to bring the

that only the textual work of art, with its layers, shifts, and surprises could prompt or express the unending, Socratic *Wissenstrieb*. The model called for a new form for philosophizing which brought together poetry and philosophy: the fragmentary and aphoristic *Athenäum* presents an example of this new form. For further discussion of the fragmentary method and its link to philosophical dialogue, cf. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, 39-58 and 84-86.

²⁰ Cf. Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign*, 76-80. This sophisticated form of pantheism gains Romantic expression in Novalis' concept "infinite versability."

disparate together: imagination portrays both identity and difference simultaneously and thus performs the infinite quality of thought.²¹

Three inter-related practices were meant to enact this theory, according to Schlegel. First, as I have mentioned above, the fragmentary form of discourse embodied a kind of incompleteness which invoked the possibility of infinite reflection and development. Second, a pure poetizing spirit was to be taken up, one which traded on the activity of the imagination in order to unify (but not necessarily synthesize) the rich multiplicity and differentiation of the world. This spirit certainly has a mythopoetic character and refers rather directly to a classical, primordial vision (about which more below). Third, Schlegel consistently emphasizes the importance of the *Witz* and *Ironie* as the practices which best perform the Romantic logic. In its standard definition, irony is saying the opposite of what one intends in order to achieve a comic effect, and a *Witz* is simply a joke or a jest. For Schlegel, these literary phenomena are given the highest philosophical status.

As Alford illustrates, *Witz* is in some sense the microcosmic form of *Ironie*.²² A simple, *witzige* statement is a surprising combination of elements. In its higher form (as dialectical), complex notions are wedded into a statement that requires the imagination of the reader for its unpacking. The *Witz* is not nonsense, nor is it straightforward “sense” (as is the case in a logically coherent proposition). Instead it brings the two together in a higher unity that requires the participation of the reader to assemble. Irony trades on a similar logic for Schlegel. Irony could be used rhetorically (for example, to say “What a beautiful day!” when it is raining and mis-

²¹ As Alford puts it, “A Romantic poet...seeks to write affectively not because emotions are better than thoughts, but because affective discourse appeals to the Imagination, which is inclusive of both thought *and* emotion. The heart, that metaphorical seat of the Imagination, is a spiritually cognitive power capable of transcending the difference between reason and unreason. Sense and understanding are not to be avoided; they are merely a reductive form of a higher mode of expression and apprehension.” *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination*, 12. Behler specifies the point: “from the point of view of knowledge, the imagination seems to have supremacy over reason if we compare the two in epistemological terms. Whereas reason tends to unify its elements of knowledge as concepts, the imagination not only tends to embrace the greatest abundance and manifoldness, but also includes the comical, droll, and quaint features of life that reason is inclined to eliminate.” Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory*, 78-79. And further with Behler, to drive the point home: “What is denied...is systemic coherence, or Hegel’s doctrine: ‘The truth is the whole.’ Completion and totality in any realizable fashion are questioned by a type of writing that, from the outset, rejects any type of closure and postpones it to an unrealizable future” (153).

²² Cf. Alford’s discussion of these matters in *Irony and the Romantic Imagination*, 30-32 and 67-70.

erable outside), and stylistic irony denotes the presence of multiple perspectives on a situation brought together within an organic whole.²³ Schlegel was interested in both of these forms of irony, but he placed the most emphasis on a third form: metaphysical irony, which is consonant with Socratic irony. Here we again encounter the importance of the dialogical form discussed above: “the technical term” for Schlegel’s sense of metaphysical irony “is Socratic or Platonic ‘dialectics’, thought and counterthought as a progressive movement of thinking.”²⁴ The performance of irony thus represents Schlegel’s direct response to the heights of German Idealism: “An idea is a concept perfected to the point of irony, an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts” (*KA* II, 184; English, 33).

Because they seem to trade on a kind of wit and sophistication, one may suspect that the context which gave rise to such theories was quite rarefied or esoteric. As Schlegel himself writes,

People are always complaining that German authors write for such a small circle, and even sometimes just for themselves. That’s how it should be. This is how German literature will gain more and more spirit and character. And perhaps in the meantime an audience will spring into being. (*KA* II, 212; English, 56)

Bolstered by such statements, Giesen argues that the kinds of practices advocated by “early Romanticism” were most decisively grounded by the intimate form of “romantic sociability”: the “salon” or “clique.” Here free dialogue between friends dominated and ironic distance demarcated the group from the rest of the society, “decoupling” communication from the ‘real world’ situation and giving rise to the infinitized value of internal communication: “Such a communication, unconstrained by considerations of completeness or groundedness, easily slides off into the infinite, into a yearning without a name.”²⁵ But Ziolkowski has convincingly

²³ Thus, an ironic drama might juxtapose a character who extols the virtues of marriage with a young man (perhaps the older man’s trusted employee) who sings the praises of his lover’s ability in bed – and unbeknownst to both, the lover and wife are the same person.

²⁴ Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory*, 147. Cf. *KA* II, 152; English, 5-6. “Philosophy is the real homeland of irony, which one would like to define as logical beauty: for wherever philosophy appears in oral or written dialogues – and is not simply confined into rigid systems – there irony should be asked for and provided.”

²⁵ Cf. Bernhard Giesen, *Intellectuals and the German Nation: Collective Identity in an Axial Age*, translated by Nicholas Levis and Amos Weisz (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 85-87. Giesen’s point is well-taken, but it is stated too strongly; as he himself

argued that the privilege of dialogue and mediation had a more outward-turning, public context: these practices were closely tied to the concrete practice of university education at Jena.²⁶ While some aspects of Schlegel's thought and practice do suggest a kind of mystico-aesthetic esotericism, the concept of *Bildung* (which is so important to Romanticism) also has a cosmopolitan openness, and Schlegel was vigorously involved in local intellectual debates. Both of these forms of engagement are quite important for positioning the *Frühromantik* conception of India. This becomes clear in an examination of the emphasis placed on historical and cultural otherness in Friedrich Schlegel's thought, to which I now turn.

Despite its predilection for flights into dialogical infinitude, Romantic mediation also had a historical grounding. For the early Romantics, dynamism and process were all-important, and following the influence of figures like Herder,²⁷ they sought to project the progress of human attainment through its diachronic dimension. There was a history that had not only to be accounted for: the historical (embodied particularly in classic texts) interrogated the present and contributed to the further progress of *Bildung* and *Humanität*.

Schlegel of course celebrated the ancient (he became well-known on the strength of his *History of Poetry of the Greek and Romans*). Without a doubt, "In der transzendentalen Geschichte des Bewußtseins hat das Phänomen des Klassischen den Charakter eines Postulates, eines absoluten Imperativs für den Menschen..."²⁸ But Schlegel did not ultimately become a Classicist: the classical postulate was counterposed by "Progression," ceaseless and open creativity on the part of the contemporary, future-looking intellectual. The ancient literature was natural, organic, coherent, and whole, while the efforts of the present fascinated and seduced. Proper *Bildung* took place when dialectical mediation was achieved between these two positions. Pure investment in the classical resulted in sterility and desiccation (regression), and pure unfettered creativity, unbounded by the guidance of tradition resulted in aimlessness and annihilation (resulting in a kind of decadence). Holding

notes, this longing did borrow thoughts from Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy (at least in Friedrich Schlegel), and thus did not completely refuse participation in an intellectual "situation."

²⁶ *German Romanticism and Its Institutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 255-256 and 267-268.

²⁷ As Behler indicates, F. Schlegel was reading Herder from a relatively early point, beginning in 1791. Cf. his introduction, *KA VIII*, LXXI.

²⁸ Behler, introduction, *KA VIII*, LXX.

both together was thus a crucial aspect of the Romantic hermeneutic.²⁹ As Schlegel wrote, “From what the moderns aim at, we learn what poetry should become; from what the ancients have done, what it has to be” (KA II, 157; English, 10).

While it is quite clear that the “historical” referred primarily to what we would consider “the Western,” it is also clear that history was a watchword for cultural difference for the Schlegels, as was the case for Herder. The “classical” surely referred to the Greek and Roman, but because Greece and Rome were victims of history, their disappearance marked an absolute difference which was mirrored in the texts. Mediating such a gap had a dramatic effect, according to Friedrich Schlegel: “*Nichts befreit den menschlichen Geist so sicher und dennoch so sanft von Einseitigkeit der Meinung und des Geschmacks, als Beschäftigung mit dem Geiste anderer Nationen und anderer Zeitalter.*”³⁰ In his famous open letter *Über Philosophie* (1799), where this historical, cross-cultural search is strongly advocated, Schlegel also suggests that investigation of myth and religion affords enlivening glimpses and hints of this spirit.³¹ Thus the history of the ancient, the history of the “other” land, and the history of religion were tied together in Schlegelian “encyclopedic” discourse, and the investigation was directed in two directions: on one hand towards the depth, source, and origin of the human imagination (which in its earliest moments was seen to make more immediate contact with the infinite), and on the other towards the future unfolding of the human spirit.

What this suggests, of course, is that the progress inculcated by the dialogue with the historically and culturally different was only meaningful to the present of the modern European; to this extent Romantic historicism was a kind of centric, perhaps even intellectually imperialist appropriation.³² Nevertheless, the assertion of the importance and concreteness of otherness in the distant past and across cultural

²⁹ Cf. Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory*, 105-110.

³⁰ Behler, introduction, KA VIII, LXXIII.

³¹ KA VIII, 48. “*Vor allen Dingen aber kann es mich reizen, den Geist der Zeitalter und der Nationen, auch in der Religion zu erspähen und zu erraten.*”

³² This thesis can easily be supported, given the way Schlegel chose to model the encounter with difference: “A work is cultivated when it is everywhere sharply delimited, but within those limits limitless and inexhaustible; when it is completely faithful to itself, entirely homogeneous, and nonetheless exalted above itself. Like the education of young Englishmen, the most important thing about it is *le grand tour*. It should have traveled through all the three or four continents of humanity, not in order to round off the edges of individuality, but to broaden its vision and give its spirit more freedom and inner versatility; and thereby greater independence and self-sufficiency” (KA II, 215; English, 59).

boundaries was a significant rejoinder to Idealist tendencies of the day. Thought about religion, for example, was certainly conceived as “*religion within the limits of art*”³³ – “art” taken here as the marker of Romantic conceptions of the infinite and eternal nature of creativity – but this brand of thinking drew attention to the curious combination of the infinite and the finite in “symbolic forms,” “whose symbolism consisted...in ‘that by which, everywhere, the appearance of the finite is placed in relation with the truth of the eternal and in this manner, precisely dissolved therein.’”³⁴ The symbol (in the textual mythology of a religious tradition, for example) thus lent Romantic inquiry a level of concreteness, but certainly as a part of a broader mission:³⁵ investigation of such forms in their primordial manifestations contributed directly to the mediation at the heart of the early Romantic project (as Schwab puts it, “‘Ur’ was the key to ‘sym’”),³⁶ where the prospects of human infinitude are discerned in the junction between the inspiration of the deepest past and a “new mythology” of the imagination: “*die Unendlichkeit des menschlichen Geistes, die Göttlichkeit aller natürlichen Dinge, und die Menschlichkeit der Götter, würde das ewige große Thema aller dieser Variationen bleiben*” (KA VIII, 60).

Given this theoretical context, which I hope has been made clear, I wish to finish this survey by specifying the places where India shines through these vast intellectual clouds as an object of intense enthusiasm and is thus constituted as an important aspect of Romantic “spiritual renewal.” Early in his career Schlegel was perhaps less than impressed by Herder’s reading of Indian sources, but by 1797 he was without a doubt caught up in the excitement about *Shakuntala*,³⁷ the Indian drama translated by Forster which had so captured Goethe. This enthusiasm takes on a decisive form from 1800 to 1804, a period which marks Schlegel’s transition to Paris and his initial studies of Indian texts themselves. As Halbfass suggests, this move to India and the Orient was generally fuelled by a desire to critique the Euro-

³³ Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, 77. Cf. KA II, 221-222; English, 65.

³⁴ Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *ibid.*

³⁵ For a discussion of the relation between Schlegel’s conceptualization of the symbol and the philosophical currents of his time, cf. Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory*, 139-141.

³⁶ Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Discovery of India and the East, 1680-1880*, translated by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press), 216.

³⁷ A. Leslie Willson, *A Mythical Image: The Ideal of India in German Romanticism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1964), 202-203.

pean present through the use of the Indian past.³⁸ This is certainly true, but especially in light of the summary I have presented above, the “critique” can be placed more precisely within the *Frühromantik* logic. This becomes clear in a brief investigation of two key texts: *Gespräch über die Poesie* from the *Athenäum* (1800) and *Reise nach Frankreich* from the the journal *Europa* (1803).³⁹

The *Gespräch* fits directly into the Romantic model of theory and practice outlined above: it portrays a conversation between friends (which can easily be compared to Plato’s *Symposium*) about the importance and nature of Romantic poetry. The discussion begins in earnest with a lengthy survey of the history of literature by one of the three women in the group, Andrea. In her speech, Andrea repeats a common Romantic theme, asserting the importance of classical and medieval literature in enlivening the present. The group deliberates over Andrea’s reflections, searching for the guiding thread or deep rationale behind her historical presentation. Is it desirable to make distinctions between genres and practices? Is it possible to discern (and create) an art that unifies all the different forms of literature? What, in the end, makes art powerful? Ludoviko volunteers a response, which he calls a “Rede über die Mythologie,” for mythology gives the answer to these questions.

The modern breakdown of culture, Ludoviko suggests, can be traced to a significant lack: “*Wir haben keine Mythologie*” (*KA* II, 312). A “new mythology” will ground a contemporary reunification, as classical mythology infused the “organic” power of Greek and Roman literature. It must reach back to the “deepest depth of spirit” and provide “a new bed and vessel for the ancient eternal origin of poesy” which embraces all forms of expression (*KA* II, 312). This new inspiration is thought to come from a rather surprising source: Idealism. For Idealism (and here Ludoviko has Fichte in mind) offers the essential rationale, the “myth,” of human spirit through its articulation of dynamic, progressive, active knowing. It grounds human freedom in progress and thus offers a framework for understanding the meaning and purpose of the historical. In fact, the whole of the human encounter with “reality” is given expression by Idealism, revealing “the secret power...through the unbounded plenitude of new invention, through universal mediation and through living efficacy” (*KA* II, 315). Thus Idealism also embraces and inspires “Realism” (and here Ludoviko is referring to Schelling), which marks an enlivened

³⁸ Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), 72-73. Cf. also Figueira, *Translating the Orient*, 206 and Ernst Behler, “Das Indienbild der deutschen Romantik,” *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 1 (1968): 20-24.

³⁹ In the following analysis, English renderings out of these texts are my own.

return to the natural, both in poetry and in natural science. And Realism opens a pathway to a “transcendental unity” of the imagination, a “*wissenschaftliche Fantasie*,” which is the “mother and source of all mythology” (KA II, 316).

In articulating this point, Ludoviko is expressing views which are at the heart of Schlegel’s own perspective – and at the heart of his response to contemporary intellectual debates. Idealism is “only a first, effecting impetus and beginning for intellectual development, alteration, and re-birth”: it must be unified at a higher level by “*wissenschaftliche Fantasie*,” which is best represented by Spinoza’s system (KA II, 316). Spinoza’s recombination of elements is the all-embracing form of myth and mysticism, wherein

ein klarer Duft schwebt unsichtbar sichtbar über dem Ganzen, überall findet die ewige Sehnsucht einen Anklang aus den Tiefen des einfachen Werks, welches in stiller Größe den Geist der ursprünglichen Liebe atmet.
(KA II, 317)

Such a system, which offers a higher, mediating unity of difference, is directly related to the historicizing function in Romanticism; it embraces the “sacrality” of the ancient and the culturally different, for in the “twofold light of revelation and world-history, I see...a purer cognition of the divine; a new or newly rejuvenated science of spirit and of the soul in God blooms forth and develops, ever richer” (KA II, 316).

But within this logic, an alternative to even “old Spinoza” must be elicited in order to “speed along” the philosophical reinvigoration of “beauty” and “cultivation”: the West must “resuscitate” other mythologies (KA II, 319), and here Ludoviko turns east. “*Im Orient müssen wir das höchste Romantische suchen*,” he proclaims, specifying India as the essential target of this quest:

Welche neue Quelle von Poesie könnte uns aus Indien fließen, wenn einige deutsche Künstler mit der Universalität und Tiefe des Sinns, mit dem Genie der Übersetzung, das ihnen eigen ist, die Gelegenheit besäßen, welche eine Nation, die immer stumpfer und brutaler wird, wenig zu brauchen versteht. (KA II, 319-320)

According to Ludoviko, India presents an opportunity for a reinvigoration of the “symbolic” realm – what Schlegel often called a new “hieroglyphic” orientation to nature. But this is not random poesy, a random plucking of nature’s flowers (as Herder’s interpretation had earlier suggested); the Indian approach performs a conscious, holistic attention to the natural world (KA II, 320), and thus it possesses the dual perspective of wholeness and difference (aggregated by the symbolic imagina-

tion) that is so important from the Romantic perspective. Thus, while Spinoza's system is certainly intertwined with the Romantic pantheism of art and history, Schlegel now recommends a new source (India) which adumbrates this theoretical system in a new way and represents a more powerful source for cultural renewal.

In *Reise nach Frankreich*, which appeared in the journal *Europa* (1803), this new mediation is even more clear. In his initial encounter with French culture, Schlegel is surprised by the artificiality on display in the marketplaces and by the French themselves, noting that a kind of pedantry and sensualism dominates. What is striking is the lack of "imagination" (*Phantasie*) which gives rise to all of the other negative qualities.⁴⁰ According to Schlegel, imagination is an integral part of German identity, which displays an "original and durable romantic" character, "*als selbst die orientalische Märchenwelt*" (5). This is not a simple announcement of German superiority: what Schlegel finds in France is pervasive throughout Europe. But the German propensity perhaps offers something of a solution to Europe's degeneration.

Schlegel searches for a new "middle point" for Europe, a point of gravity which can unify the disparate geography of intellectual pursuit. As it is, the European divides philosophy and poetry, the sciences and the arts, the ancient and the modern, and insists generally on divisions. Schlegel recalls the character of the Orient as a contrast:

Was im Orient alles in Einem mit ungeteilter Kraft aus der Quelle springt, das sollte hier sich mannigfach teilen und künstlicher entfalten. Der Geist des Menschen sollte sich hier zersetzen, seine Kraft sich ins Unendliche trennen und eben darum zu manchem fähig werden, wozu er es sonst nicht sein würde. (14)

In India, however, even the most difficult distinctions are overcome:

in Indien zur höchsten Schönheit vereint ist...in kräftigster Eigentümlichkeit ohne gegenseitige Ausschließung dicht nebeneinander besteht. Um ein Beispiel zu geben was dem Mittelpunkte der innern Kräfte besonders nahe liegt: die geistige Selbstvernichtung der Christen, und der üppigste wildeste Materialismus in der Religion der Griechen, beide find ihr höheres Urbild im gemeinschaftlichen Vaterlande, in Indien. (14-15)

⁴⁰ Friedrich Schlegel, *Studiumausgabe: Kritische Schriften und Fragmente [1803-1812]*, vol. 3, edited by Ernst Behler and Hans Eichner, 11-12.

Even such radically distinguished concepts are brought together in this “sublime manner of thinking,” which certainly recalls the combinatorial, mediating logic of “early Romanticism” described above. Becoming acquainted with the foundations of this “truly universal culture [*Bildung*]” and with the the concept of divinity “without difference in its infinity” inspired by it thus introduces the European to “religion.” Thus, if one wants to see real religion, one should visit India (and perhaps a textual visit would suffice), “as one goes to Italy to learn art” (15).

This kind of visit is all the more necessary because the organic, unifying religious vision is entirely lacking in Europe: “Man hat es in der Kunst der willkürlichen Trennung, oder was dasselbe ist, im Mechanismus in der Tat sehr weit gebracht, und so ist denn auch der Mensch selbst fast zur Maschine geworden, in der nur gerade so viel Geist noch übrig geblieben ist...” In short, “a person cannot sink any deeper” (16). Religion and mythology come from the Orient and address the mechanistic quality of the age through its inexhaustible source of enthusiasm and renewal (*ibid.*). Thus Schlegel recommends a new harmony between the “North” and “the Orient” (17) which effectively circumvents the classical. Schlegel is emphatic about this new orientation in a letter to Tieck from the same year: “Hier ist eigentlich die Quelle aller Sprachen, aller Gedanken und Gedichte des menschlichen Geistes; alles, alles stammt aus Indien ohne Ausnahme. Ich habe über vieles eine ganz andere Ansicht und Einsicht bekommen, seit ich aus dieser Quelle schöpfen kann.”⁴¹

Thus, in India, the specific brand of Romantic pantheism and drive towards a dialectic with the primordial past come together. While the importance of the relation to primordial antiquity was initially forged in a relation to the “classical,” now European culture must go even deeper for renewal. Schlegel criticizes European philosophy for executing a mere “continuation” of the classical. Spinoza, interestingly enough, is included in this judgment. But even the classical authors seemed to be reacting to a more primordial religious source in their own context (15). Schlegel is obviously asserting the presence of a deeper, more profound pantheism in India, which he makes clear in specifying the concept of divinity there, which is “without difference in its infinity.” In the remarkable way in which such objects actually gain in authority through use and weathering, Spinoza’s image is no longer clear in the German pantheism icon; the thick ritual smoke of intellectual debate and discus-

⁴¹ Quoted in Willson, 210-211.

sion have given it a very different patina, and the gaze that peers out now (in 1803) is decisively Indian.

Reading the Textual Hieroglyphs of August Wilhelm's India

It should be noted from the outset, that while Friedrich Schlegel had indeed advocated the “philology of philosophy,” August Wilhelm Schlegel was even *more* philologically inclined. He was emphatically a mediator of literary texts and paid less attention to philosophical discussions. While he was certainly a driving force behind the theories and program of Jena Romanticism, he devoted himself to the act of translation in an effort to capture and transmit the texts which truly founded the idea of the Romantic, especially Shakespeare. While his brother was turning to India in Paris (and engaging in epic analysis of “world philosophy”), A.W. Schlegel was continuing his translation program and offering several important lecture series on literature and the fine arts. In short, he persisted in his identity as a literary critic and translator, while his brother significantly expanded this identity.⁴²

August Wilhelm's interest in India seemingly began at a very early point, inspired by his elder brother's travels in the sub-continent. He in fact offered a eerily prophetic tribute to brother Karl August's endeavors in a 1787 poem, “*Bestattung des Brahminen. Eine Phantasie an meinem Bruder in Ostindien*,” which is worthy of some attention. Schlegel's poem begins with an image of far-flung otherness: the two brothers gathered under the cooling shade of a palm-tree, attempting to find rest and relief. But the author bursts forth: “*Bruder, hier ergieß' ich was ich fühle, / Hauche du dein Mitgefühl mir zu*” (SW 1, 82). Let us consider the lot of man, he suggests – but it can only be (in the end) “the womb of the dark grave.” The melancholic tone is of course commonplace in the *Sturm und Drang* and early Roman-

⁴² This difference in temperament is perhaps captured by August Wilhelm himself in a poem to his brother, “An Friedrich Schlegel” (1802): “Ich sagte: Laß die Wurzeln/ Fest in den Boden wurzeln/ Zu gründen unser Holz./ Du sagtest: Treib die Säfte/ Hinan zum Wipfel stolz.” *Sämmtliche Werke*, Band 1, hrsg. von Eduard Böcking (Leipzig: Weidmann'sche Buchhandlung, 1847), 246. (All further references to Schlegel's *Sämmtliche Werke* will appear as SW followed by volume and page numbers. All translations are my own.) Allowing the “roots to take root” entails a simple pairing of tasks: On one hand, “Die Kritik ist es, welche die Geschichte der Künste aufklärt, und ihre Theorie fruchtbar macht” (SW 5, 4); on the other, the translator brings texts to light and reconstitutes them such that they set the firm rooting for contemporary renewal.

tic period: the poet's soul is tormented and imprisoned, seeking liberation in "eternal beauty," a "homeland" where one bathes "in an ocean of light."

Back under the palm tree, a noise is heard, at first a dull roar which becomes louder as something nears, until finally the sound is quite deafening. It is a funeral procession, for it becomes clear that the brothers find themselves in the midst of a cremation ground, covered with the "black wings of death," clouded by *Todtenstaub*, the ash of the dead (SW 1, 83). The procession comes forth with men, elders, mothers, and children. And the wives appear with tear-stained faces, now preparing the funeral pyre: "*Laß uns näher an den Schauplatz treten*" (SW 1, 84), says the poet. Now the deceased, who has just been unveiled, can be seen, and the author is transfixed:

*Sehnlich soll mein Blick an ihnen hangen,
Bis vom Holzstoß helle Flammen wehn.
Lächelnd fühltest du die Stirn erkalten,
Lächelnd sanken die die Augen zu;
Engelfüße prägten in die Falten
Wonn' und Paradiesesruh.* (ibid.)

The dead man calls out to his God in Schlegel's imagination, a song of praise and a call for guidance: "*Lehrte doch dein Bildniß jeden müden/ Pilger, wie er sterben soll...O wie oft.../Lehrtest du erhabne Weisheit mich*" (83-84). The imagined pilgrim hangs on the god's very judgment as he looks towards his "fresh well" of re-birth.

This reverie breaks off as the intensity of the mourning increases, for the time has come to offer a last farewell. The boy who is meant to light the pyre clings closely to his mother but eventually steps forth – and sets the fire. The flames rise "like lightning" and one "feels death deep in the interior" (85). The mourning continues and the fire blazes up, but after some time the mourners begin to depart, abandoning the dead man to his pyre: "They disappear from my view: but never/ from my mind their sorrowful image" (86). The west wind plays with the ashes, and the dimming fire along with the dissolving smoke shrouds the scene in a blue haze. In the end, "The flame alone mourns! Dully it flickers/ from the shores of the horizon back here,/ Dying, like a dim lamp for the sick, flickers,/ it trembles, and is no more" (86).

One wonders about the information that August Wilhelm was receiving from his brother from India such that he would write something so morbid – and prescient. That the last image of the poem (a *Krankenlämpchen*) would so strongly evoke death by a slow illness suggests that the author somehow had an inkling of what

was to come. Did Karl August report on witnessing an Indian funeral or, indeed, on his fear of dying by slow illness? These questions have no clear resolution without extremely intensive research,⁴³ but at the most basic level August Wilhelm had early on formed some idea of India which was closely linked to proto-Romantic themes: death, melancholy, and *Sehnsucht*.

But Schlegel did not immediately pursue these themes in connection with India. Only in a 1791 review did he take note of the *Shakuntala*, registering a typically Herderian impression: “*Die Scenen sind voll süßen kindlichen Geschwätzes, voll unschuldiger, naiver Koketterie; es herrscht eine feine Sensibilität darin, welche die zartesten Blüten des Genußes mit schonender Hand zu pflücken weiß*” (SW 10, 34). During the early 1790’s he turned to translating Italian poetry, including some of Petrarch and Ariosto’s works, and especially Dante. The *Divine Comedy* clearly made a deep impression on Schlegel; he translated major sections of the *Inferno* and commented heavily on the work (which is in no way discontinuous with a meditation on his brother’s death), urging an understanding of the Italian poet’s individual spirit in his art, rather than abstracted commentary on the poem’s doctrines (SW 3, 199-202). Thus Schlegel is careful to contextualize the work and the poet’s life. In the poem itself the young critic and translator was especially attracted to its allegorical quality, its “hieroglyphics,” which recall the obscure but fascinating modes of lost antiquity (226-227).⁴⁴ Mere “concepts of the understanding,” he suggests,

⁴³ In A.W. Schlegel’s collected letters, only the report of Karl August’s death is present, and none of the scholars I have read (including the formidable Behler) mention letters from him. The report from August von Honstedt does describe the way in which Karl August was weakened by a “two-year-old affliction” which involved “abundant discharge of bilious material” and “frequent vomiting,” suggesting any one of a variety of maladies. According to the letter, Karl August’s limbs eventually became numb and he was unable to leave his sick bed. A month before his death (and now Honstedt quotes out of a letter written to him from the sick man himself), he knew that his end was near: “*Das habe ich mir schon Jahre lang gesagt, und beynah jeder Tag ist ein Beweis gewesen, daß ich schon zu lange gelebt...*” On the ninth of September Karl August experienced a “chest spasm,” which seemed to subside, but as he rested on a chair he “cast eyes towards heaven, held his breath – and perished.” At the end of his report, Honstedt does in fact mention Karl August’s papers which were meant to go to August Wilhelm. The bundle is apparently “*zu stark*” to send by the normal means, so Honstedt proposes to send it with someone who is travelling to Germany, or to bring it himself at the end of the year. *Briefe von und an August Wilhelm Schlegel, Erster Teil: Die Texte*, edited by Josef Körner (Leipzig: Amalthea-Verlag, 1930), 5-9. It is unclear whether these papers actually arrived, though Friedrich’s tribute in *Über die Sprache* suggests that he was aware of a body of research that his eldest brother had begun to carry out.

⁴⁴ This sense is captured in one of Schlegel’s own fragments from the *Athenäum*: “*Im Stil des ächten Dichters ist Nichts Schmuck, Alles nothwendige Hieroglyphe*” (SW 8, 15).

“have neither life nor beauty for the imagination,” so allegory is often employed to give them substance. But for most poets the allegorical figures merely hang on the concepts, with no real life of their own. In Dante it is entirely different: the figures in his poem have independent life and vividness. “We everywhere step on fixed ground” and enter “a world of reality and individual being” (226).

This emphasis on symbolic vividness and aesthetic individuality are common themes marking the transition from *Sturm and Drang* to the *Frühromantik* movement. These themes are reinforced in Schlegel’s 1795 work, *Briefe über Poesie, Silbenmaß und Sprache*, but here the spirit of proto-Romanticism meets its necessary counterparts: the discipline of philology and the study of language. The poet, Schlegel argues, is everything that Dante was in the earlier commentaries, and perhaps even something more:

Der Dichter...ist vor allen andern Sterblichen ein begünstigter Liebling der Natur, ein Vertrauer und Bote der Götter, deren Offenbarungen er jenen überbringt. Die irdische Sprache, die nur zu unverkennbar die Spuren des Bedürfnisses und der Eingeschränktheit, welche sie erzeugten, an sich trägt, kann ihm hiezu nicht genügen; die seinige athmet in reinem Aether, sie ist eine Tochter der unsterblichen Harmonie. (SW 7, 98)

But poetry “only arises out of verses, verses out of words, words out of syllables, and syllables out of individual sounds.” Thus a more technical appraisal of technique and language is necessary in order to understand the “pure ether” that the poet breathes.

In a sense, this pure medium surrounds all of humanity, from the “icy seas” to the “South Sea islands,” from “Ontario” to “the Ganges,” for the “rythmic movement of poesy is no less natural to humanity that it is itself” (SW 7, 103). The most natural, primordial mode of language, Schlegel claims, is the musical, the dance-like, the rythmic. Thus, language is essentially aesthetic, a product of the inherently human “faculty for poetics,” and is itself “so to say, the great, never completed poetic work” (SW 7, 104). Within this grand capacity, humanity necessarily finds itself conceptualizing the world and nature according to concepts of the understanding, and thus the grand unifying power of aesthetic speech is limited and dispersed. But even in the “cultured language” of sophisticated science the traces of the original rhythm shine through: the poet recognizes these traces and is able to reconstitute the original aesthetic whole (SW 7, 105).

In order to understand and support this enterprise, Schlegel urges investigation of the structures of meter and verse, but not in its contemporary manifestation.

“Nein, laß uns in jene früheren Zeiten zurückkehren, wo die erst unmündige, bald kindliche, dann jugendliche Kunst...von der gütigen Natur selbst gepflegt und erzogen ward” (SW 7, 108). And when one examines this past, one finds a general phenomenon: the poet reaches for metrical artifice to attain a “higher perfection” in the connection with its original power. This aesthetic synthesis between the purely natural expression (a cry in response to direct experience) and a highly conceptual orientation (categorizing objects) is, in short, a basic formulation of Schlegel’s theory of the origin of language (cf. SW 7, 117-118).

While Schlegel’s view is surprisingly non-reductionistic, he maintains a consistent discourse of origins around questions of language and poetry which makes the usual Romantic references to the “childhood” of humanity and its innocent connection with nature. Thus it is unsurprising that Schlegel draws upon *morgenländische* examples to support his theories, including songs and tales from the Arabs (117, 134) and Chinese (122-123), which emphasize the quality of language’s spontaneous, musical, rhythmic origins. While Schlegel does not include India in this list, he certainly could have, as we see in the 1798 work from the *Athenäum*, *Der Wettstreit der Sprachen*.

In this text, *Poesie* engages in dialogue with personifications of the major European languages and also its counterpart *Grammatik*. After the first phase of arguments between the languages about their particularities, *Poesie* announces its global agenda, for it has wandered the world from “the beautiful shores of the Ganges” to “Ohio,” to Africa and the Siberian steppes, from the “fog of the Scottish highlands” to the “South Sea Hesperides” (SW 7, 210).⁴⁵ And in these far-flung places languages are found which embody the poetic spirit because they are closer to natural origins; Sanskrit is set aside for particular praise: “thus the delicate Sanskrit or ‘the completed,’ for which divinity itself devised the means of writing” (SW 7, 214). One perhaps wonders why Sanskrit itself is not sitting at the table, engaging in conversation, but it is entirely consistent that its particularity (with which Schlegel was not yet familiar) would be displaced by the overwhelming personality of *Poesie* in this context.

In these discussions (and particularly in the *Wettstreit* text), Schlegel consistently shows his interest in language *überhaupt*, displaying a broad interest and familiarity

⁴⁵ In this vein *Poesie* chastises the personification of Italian: “Was ist das heutige Europa gegen den Umfang des Menschengeschlechts in den verschiedensten Himmelstrichen und Zeitaltern? Europäischer Geschmack ist nur ein erweiterer Nationalgeschmack” (210).

with linguistic and poetic forms. Thus his interest (as we reach the Jena period)⁴⁶ remains less targeted on India than that of his brother. But in 1802, the year in which Friedrich makes his commitment to learning Indian sources, August Wilhelm seems to absorb his brother's enthusiasm. He looks upon Friedrich with admiration as he takes up his Sanskrit study in Paris, reinstating the usual Romantic myth of Indian culture in the process: "*Und schon dich dein Gemüthe/ Hinlockt mit kühnerm Triebe,/ Gleich welumfahrnen Schiffern,/ Zu lauschen, wie am Ganges/ Getönt voll sel'gen Klanges/ Manch indisch Blumenlied,/ Und Weisheit zu entziffern/ Aus heiliger Sanskrit*" (SW 1, 245). But during the same year August Wilhelm would present a more developed position, which represents India within the context of a public contribution to local cultural debates.

This position appears in a series delivered in Berlin towards the end of 1802 called *Über Literatur, Kunst und Geist des Zeitalters*, which was printed the following year in the second volume of the *Europa* journal, discussed in the section above. August Wilhelm's position is essentially in harmony with his brother's. After opening with a survey of the state of German literature (novels, drama, poetry, journals), as well as that of the French and the English, Schlegel concludes that there is not much to single out for praise.⁴⁷ The present state of the arts in Europe can only look to and honor the past. Why is this the case? In short, the present age is entirely concerned with "the real," "the useful," "the scientific" (44). This outlook can be traced to the Enlightenment, according to Schlegel,⁴⁸ which forecloses higher aims

⁴⁶ Because I have discussed Friedrich Schlegel's understanding of the *Frühromantik* program above in some detail, I will not delve into A.W. Schlegel's particular perspective on it. Surely the brothers agreed on a great deal, though A.W. is more theoretically, philosophically reserved, constraining himself to philological and literary critical matters. Nevertheless, his rhetoric during this period is in no way discontinuous with that of his brother.

⁴⁷ "*Dieser kurze Überblick kann uns schon lehren, daß von dem jetzigen Zustande der schönen Literatur bei den aus gezeichnetsten Nationen Europas nicht viel zu rühmen ist; daß sie, wo wie die Deutschen darin seit dem Anfange der gelehrteren Bildung, noch nie recht emporgekommen... von ehemaligen Höhen heruntergesunken.*" August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Kritische Schriften und Briefe III: Geschichte der klassischen Literatur*, edited by Edgar Lohner (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1964), 41. Translations from this text are again my own.

⁴⁸ Schlegel rarely "names names" in his polemic, and while he surely targets the German *Aufklärer* through parody of stock phrases from the Kantian corpus, the cultural developments he targets seem to be more of a product of the British and French Enlightenments, as Schlegel sees them. Thus, in a very curious portrayal of the history of European intellectual development, Schlegel argues that the Enlightenment arises out of the Reformation (which is in its origins an authentically German movement), but France and England have taken over this genealogy and now perpetrate their intellectual colonialism over Germany, which has become – "the actual Orient of Europe" (73-74). Thus Germany, like India or Egypt, is the *source* of

through its negative critique and leads to the principle of the “*Nützlich an sich*” (64). The result is a materialist, mechanistic, economic outlook and, in its worst form, a total disruption of morality and religion: “*Wer nun das Nützliche als das Oberste setzt, der muß einsehen, daß es damit zuletzt auf sinnlichen Genuß hinausläuft, und bei einiger Klarheit und Konsequenz sich zu dem krassesten Epikuräismus, zur Vergötterung des Vergnügens bekennen*” (63). This “crassest Epicureanism” appears on the one hand, but it is accompanied by a lofty esotericism, a sense of speculative creation, whereby the “Enlighteners” say “let there be light” – and supposedly there is (64).

Schlegel allows that humanity is certainly directed to “conditioned goals,” which fall under the label of the “useful.” But humanity is also directed to “unconditioned goals,” “goods” which critical reason cannot fully decipher, nor can abstract speculation simply launch itself into them. According to Schlegel, it is crucial to think of these goods as “ideas,” which are discerned through “spiritual intuition” “with unusual energy and clarity” (64). Evoking common *Frühromantik* themes, Schlegel argues that progress to these higher, clearer ideas has always been achieved within the great spheres of culture (philosophy, poetry, religion, and morality). Properly conceived, these spheres are the ground for the ideas which orient life, but in the present age ideas have failed, because, in a sense, the idea of them has failed. It is an age full of ideas (qua “Idealism”), but the pure sense of Platonic ideas has been lost, whereby

der darunter die Urbilder der Dinge im göttlichen Verstande, in welchem, Denken und Anschauen eins ist, versteht, denen allein wahres Sein zukomme, und worin Allgemeines und Besonderes nicht, wie in der Erscheinungswelt Begriff und Individuum, getrennt, sondern unzertrennlich verknüpft sei. (49)

Instead of pursuing these “*materialisierte Ideen*” (66), the ideas of the present age throw the spheres of culture into confusion, reducing art and poetry, for example, to a simple reading of nature (*Verstandesprosa*), while nature is thought out to its “final goal.” And philosophy urges a return to direct experience, but it also limits experience and takes speculation as “absolute knowledge.” Religion is also placed in limits “because...it allows of no scientific demonstration,” so it is dismissed as a “empty, flat phantom,” useful only for morality.

great historical, cultural developments, but its ancestors have turned around and colonized it with a transformed (and bastardized) version of its own ideas.

Thus it is clear for Schlegel that the spheres of culture have been diminished because the ideas which simultaneously arise from and guide them have been diminished by the negative critique of the Enlightenment, such that they are entirely drained of their power. Thus, if we continue

to define all true speculation as transcendence, as aberration of reason beyond its limits, all religious mysticism as heresy and Schwärmerei, all genial poetry as eccentricity of imagination, and to substitute in the place of the genuine ideas of these things their empty concepts: so must they have something completely different chosen as the most important and best...
(50-51)

Schlegel requires a reorientation towards culture which will circumvent and supplant the interruption of Enlightenment thinking. The “something completely different” Schlegel mentions is a higher mediation which will overcome the ethos of the Enlightenment: the relationship between “*Vernunft und Fantasie*” must be freed from the “*Herrschaft des Verstandes*,” such that culture can once again touch upon the “*Grundkraft*” which stands behind both (45, 72).⁴⁹

This new relation is a mediated synthesis which surely trades on the “new mythology” of the *Frühromantiker* (like that discussed by his brother in the *Athenäum*). Symbols naturally play an important role in this effort, and the “materialized ideas” discussed above are homologous with symbols in A.W. Schlegel’s thinking. Thus the Enlightenment critique of religion, which attempts to resist “all secrets and mysteries,” rejecting all outer trappings of religion in favor of an individual, personal faith, is essentially misguided.

In order to deserve its name, [the Enlightenment] should have instead known to enliven the so to speak petrified and lifeless symbol once again. Instead it wants a pure, rational religion, without mythology, with images and signs, and without rites. (70)

By sapping religion of its symbolic power, the Enlightenment also robs the poet, for the symbol is the unifying and fructifying point of connection between religion and poetry. Enlightenment concern about anthropomorphism may be appropriate, but the answer does not lie in purifying symbol-making out of existence; rather,

⁴⁹ Also cf. 65: “*beide sind gleich schaffend und allmächtig, und ob sie sich wohl unendlich entgegengesetzt scheinen, indem die Vernunft unbedingt auf Einheit dringt, die Fantasie in grenzenloser Männigfaltigkeit ihr Spiel treibt, sind sie doch die gemeinschaftliche Grundkraft unseres Wesens.*”

symbols should be “enlivened” and thought more grandly. It is one thing to think about everything within an earthly, corporeal frame, for example, which is the consequence of the Enlightenment itself. But what if the imagination were put to work on an allegorization of the world, such that the universe were thought of as the “body of God”: “*so bekommt der Anthropomorphismus eine ganz andere Gestalt, und eine Bedeutung, die weit über den Horizont der gewöhnlichen Aufklärung hinausgeht*” (70).

This sense of allegorization thus has broad application in Schlegel’s text. The four spheres of culture, for example, are compared to the four cardinal directions and the four elements (46-48) in lengthy conceits. And here we arrive at the crucial point for Schlegel’s more developed conceptualization of India. It is interesting (but perhaps unsurprising) that religion is associated with the east: “*Die Religion is der Osten, die Region der Erwartung; ewige Morgenröte ist ihr Symbol, indem die Sonne, die von sterblichen Augen nicht ohne Blendung angeschaut werden kann, aus den irdischen Dünsten einen Schleier um sich zieht, der in den schönsten Farben spielt*” (47). This region of religious expectation is rather precisely identified later on – as India.

Z.B. von der indischen Mythologie, Geschichte und Literatur sind gewiß die wichtigsten Aufschlüsse über die Geschichte des Menschengeschlechts zu erwarten, wenn man erst in ihren Sinn eingedrungen sein wird; man hat den Anfang damit gemacht, diese ehrwürdigen Urkunden zugänglich zu machen, allein noch warten sie auf ihre Enträtselung. (51)

The response to the desiccation of Enlightenment thinking, according to Schlegel, is an expansion of European knowledge which discerns a locale for the reinvigoration of symbolic thinking, thus actually touching upon the unifying, mediating *Grundkraft* behind all things. One very promising possibility, according to Schlegel, is the “decipherment” of Indian antiquity.

Thus Schlegel offers a position which supports his brother’s in the pages of the *Europa* journal. August Wilhelm is not quite as fixated on India at this point as the site for the spiritual renewal of Europe, nor is he as precise in positioning it with regard to local philosophical debates,⁵⁰ but his openness to its possibility is quite clear. August Wilhelm is more tempered, however, and this leads to an important

⁵⁰ The *Grundkraft* to which Schlegel consistently refers could easily be related to a Romantic version of pantheism, like the one articulated in Friedrich’s thought. But August Wilhelm does not develop the doctrine, and thus the pantheism icon is not so clearly dominant in his interpretation of India.

point of distinction. Despite his support of *Frühromantik* sensibilities, August Wilhelm's comments about symbolic, spiritual renewal are framed by a call to the developing academic disciplines within the human sciences. The arts were once not "mechanical," as they are in the contemporary age. Thus, philosophy, history, and philology all play an important role (as well as mathematics, and the physical sciences) in retrieving older, more powerful forms, as long as the disciplines are understood in the correct manner (according to genuine "ideas") and are trained on the right objects. The *scholar* therefore plays a pivotal role: Friedrich certainly heard this call in going to Paris to study and eventually writing *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (even if this scholarship was still intermingled with enthusiasm). But August Wilhelm himself would heed rather rigorously to the call of Indian scholarship later in his life: in 1818 he became the first chair of Indology in Germany at Bonn.

Conclusion

It is clear that the views I have discussed above come from a very specific time and place in European intellectual history. The myth of the "positive Orientalist" is manifest in these views, where Romantic enthusiasm idealizes instead of denigrates, and yet performs essentially the same function: by projecting desires onto the other culture and its "spiritual" center, the Schlegels essentially *deny the agency, reality, and resistance to* the subject of their vision. The other is appropriated for internal purposes, and this is itself tokenistic and imperialistic.

And yet as an intellectual starting point for encounter, we could definitely think of worse occasions. In addition, when it comes to interpreting that which is other, it is difficult to know where else one would start *besides* the debates and passions which are "internal." Gadamer's hermeneutical model has made this point quite forcefully. From the survey of Schlegelian thought presented above, however, we can push this kind of observation even further. At the theoretical level, Jena Romanticism insisted on a kind of grand unifying vision, one might say, a "spiritual" vision, which was actually not meant to absorb and assimilate – at least in theory. Instead, thought was always in movement through the encounter with the other in dialogue and this movement could never be fully systematized, only thought in fragmentary wholes. Thus the otherness of culture as past and as distant fascinated the Schlegel brothers: this otherness pressed itself on contemporary Europe and *demand[ed] to be read, demand[ed] further dialogue*, and challenged the belief that the center really held there at all.

It would be anachronistic and perhaps misguided to suggest these thoughts as a “model” for thinking through the present experiment in unification, especially given the rather controversial history of mixing Romanticism and politics in Europe. Nevertheless, the openness to Indian otherness in the early thoughts of the Schlegels does give one pause in reflecting on what might constitute identification with Europe and the role that a “spiritual renewal” will play in that process. It may in fact be that the transcendent other to whom we call for such renewal (and who splits the European self in a dynamic whole) is *already here*, has *always already been here*, as the Hindu, the Muslim, the Taoist, etc. Thus the “call” only truly means a recognition, perhaps, of those who are already neighbors – real, physical neighbors, and also those who have already played a part in the European cultural tradition, even in their very alterity.