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GERMAN PHILOSOPHY *of* LANGUAGE

From Schlegel to Hegel and beyond

MICHAEL N. FORSTER

German Philosophy of Language

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*From Schlegel to Hegel
and Beyond*

Michael N. Forster

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To the memory of Michael Frede (1940–2007)

Acknowledgments

Together with its companion volume *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition*, this volume is dedicated to the memory of Michael Frede, who, shortly after retiring from the Chair in the History of Philosophy at Oxford University in 2005, died tragically while swimming in the sea near Delphi in the summer of 2007. Together with Raymond Geuss, Michael supervised my doctoral dissertation on Hegel's reception of ancient skepticism at Princeton University in the early 1980s. He was an intellectually inspiring and generous teacher, as well as a constant source of inspiration and support throughout the rest of his life.

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Several of the essays in this volume have been published before in some form. I would therefore like to thank the publishers and editors of the following essays for allowing me to re-publish them here: "Hegel and Some (Near-) Contemporaries: Narrow or Broad Expressivism?" *Das Interesse des Denkens: Hegel aus heutiger Sicht*, ed. K. Vieweg and W. Welsch (Wilhelm Fink, 2003); "Hegel and Hermeneutics," *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. F.C. Beiser (Cambridge University Press, 2009); "Language," *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. A.W. Wood (Cambridge University Press, 2011); "Hermeneutics," *The Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy*, ed. B. Leiter and M. Rosen (Oxford University Press, 2008).

Last but not least I would like to thank my family for their love, support, and patience: my wife Noha, my daughter Alya, and my parents Michael and Kathleen.

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The present volume is preceded by a companion volume *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition* whose contents are:

Introduction

Part I: Herder

1. Johann Gottfried Herder
2. Herder's Philosophy of Language, Interpretation, and Translation: Three Fundamental Principles
3. Gods, Animals, and Artists: Some Problem Cases in Herder's Philosophy of Language
4. Herder's Importance as a Philosopher
5. Herder on Genre
6. Herder and the Birth of Modern Anthropology
7. The Liberal Temper in Classical German Philosophy: Freedom of Thought and Expression

Part II: Hamann

8. Johann Georg Hamann
9. Hamann's Seminal Importance for the Philosophy of Language?

Part III: Schleiermacher

10. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher
11. Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics: Some Problems and Solutions
12. Herder, Schleiermacher, and the Birth of Foreignizing Translation

Select Bibliography

Abbreviations

DGS	Wilhelm Dilthey, <i>Gesammelte Schriften</i> (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1914–)
FSSW	<i>Friedrich Schleiermacher's sämtliche Werke</i> (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1835–), references to division, volume, and page
G	<i>Johann Gottfried Herder Werke</i> , ed. U. Gaier et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985–)
KFSA	<i>Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe</i> , ed. E. Behler et al. (Munich: F. Schöningh, 1958–)
S	<i>Johann Gottfried Herder Sämtliche Werke</i> , ed. B. Suphan et al. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1877–)
WHGS	<i>Wilhelm von Humboldts Gesammelte Schriften</i> , ed. A. Leitzmann et al. (Berlin: B. Behr, 1903–)

All references are to volume and page unless otherwise stated.

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Introduction

In the Anglophone world the philosophy of language has for some time now enjoyed something like the status of “first philosophy,” having displaced in that central position such previous occupants as metaphysics and epistemology. But where did the philosophy of language begin? Michael Dummett claims that Frege is “the father of ‘linguistic philosophy,’”¹ and Anthony Kenny similarly maintains that “Frege gave philosophy its current linguistic turn.”² Assuming, as seems reasonable, that the expressions “linguistic philosophy” and “[philosophy’s] linguistic turn” here refer mainly to the two doctrines that (1) thought is essentially dependent on and bounded by language, and (2) meaning consists in the use of words, then these historical claims are false. Long before Frege, a series of important German thinkers, including Herder, Hamann, Schleiermacher, Friedrich Schlegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Hegel, had already espoused versions of these doctrines. And far from introducing them, Frege actually reacted *against* them, backing off the bold claim that thought is *essentially* dependent on and bounded by language and substituting for it the weaker claim that the dependence in question is only a contingent feature of the thought of human beings, as well as rejecting any equation of meaning with the use of words in favor of a Platonism about meaning, or “sense” (see Essay 8).³ The present volume and its companion volume *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition* explore the *real* beginnings of modern philosophy of language, namely in the earlier German tradition just mentioned. One of their aims is thus to correct a mistake and fill a lacuna in Anglophone philosophy of language’s knowledge of its own origins, and hence in its self-understanding. In doing this, *After Herder* was mainly concerned with Herder, Hamann, and Schleiermacher. The present volume by contrast mainly focuses on Friedrich Schlegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Hegel.

In addition to the controversial historical claim just stated, these volumes also make a number of further controversial historical claims. One of these is that it was *Herder* who played the most fundamental role within the earlier

German tradition in question. It seems to me that Coseriu sums up the situation pretty well in the following isolated aperçu:

Herder famously (or: as should be famous) stands at the beginning of classical German philosophy of language not only chronologically; he is at the same time the “main source,” so to speak, and the constant, even if only implicit, reference point of the philosophy of language. Fichte, Friedrich and A.W. Schlegel, Schleiermacher and Schelling, Hegel and Humboldt all take over, directly or indirectly, explicitly or tacitly, ideas of Herder’s. That many of these ideas often appear in these authors much more elaborated and better proven than in Herder himself should not be allowed to obscure the fact that they are already to be found in Herder at least in a seminal form and that Herder in many respects simply made the beginning.⁴

Accordingly, one of the things I attempt to do in *After Herder* and the present volume is in effect to provide a detailed vindication of this aperçu. In *After Herder* I was especially concerned to make a case that three important revolutions which occurred towards the end of the eighteenth century in the philosophy of language (now understood *stricto sensu*), the theory of interpretation (or “hermeneutics”), and the theory of translation were all deeply connected; that these revolutions were mainly the work, not of the philosophers who have tended to receive most of the credit for them, namely Hamann and Schleiermacher, but of Herder, who achieved them first and then passed them on to Hamann and Schleiermacher; and moreover, that his versions of them were to a great extent philosophically superior to theirs. The present volume continues the task of vindicating the claim of Herder’s fundamental role, but this time mainly in relation to Friedrich Schlegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Hegel.

Another controversial historical claim made in these volumes is that, besides laying the foundations for modern philosophy of language, hermeneutics, and translation-theory, Herder also laid the foundations for such entire new disciplines (intimately related to those fields) as cultural anthropology and linguistics. The case of anthropology was mainly discussed in *After Herder*.⁵ The present volume mainly discusses the case of linguistics (see Essay 4).

Those are some of the more dramatic historical claims championed in these two volumes. However, the purpose of these volumes is not *only* historical, but also to a considerable extent systematic; they aim not only to set the historical record straight, but also to rescue and champion a tradition of thought about language which, in my opinion, gets many important things right that more recent philosophers of language have tended to get wrong. For example, *After Herder* in effect made a case that—in sharp contrast to recent Anglophone philosophers of language such as Quine and especially Davidson, who have erroneously sought to undercut or minimize the claim that radical intellectual diversity occurs across historical periods and cultures, and who have only

developed theories of “interpretation” and “translation” of a highly abstract and dubious sort, with little potential value for people actually engaged in such activities—Herder and his tradition correctly embraced that claim, and consequently undertook the task of thinking through its fundamental implications for the methodologies of interpretation and translation in ways which are both philosophically profound and of enormous relevance for actual practice. Similarly, the present volume sketches a case in defense of a thesis of the fundamental diversity of grammars which Herder and Schlegel originally developed against Chomsky’s more recent contrary thesis of a “universal grammar” (Essay 4). And it also sketches a case in defense of Herder and Schleiermacher’s insistence in their theories of interpretation on the need to avoid a pervasive pitfall of assimilating the interpreted Other’s viewpoint to one’s own against Gadamer’s recent championing of such assimilation (Essays 7 and 9).

Part of what is so interesting and admirable in this earlier German tradition as compared with more recent philosophy of language is thus its sheer philosophical *depth*, the fact that its ideas are often superior to those that later came to dominate philosophy of language in the twentieth century. This depth is not altogether surprising on reflection, for the following reason. To put it a bit pointedly, compared with most recent philosophers of language, the thinkers in this earlier tradition *knew a lot* about language. In particular, they all had an impressive knowledge, not only of their native German and other modern European languages, but also of ancient languages (for example, they all had good Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and several of them also knew Sanskrit), and in some cases culturally distant living languages as well (for example, Humboldt knew a number of these). Moreover, they were all deeply engaged in, and skilled at, the tasks of interpreting and translating texts, including not only texts in other modern European languages but also ones in historically-culturally distant languages. This intimate, skilled acquaintance with a broad range of languages and linguistic tasks could hardly but lend depth to their theoretical ideas about language.

In addition to sheer depth, another striking virtue of this earlier tradition’s ideas about language is their *breadth*, which contrasts sharply with the narrowness of most recent Anglophone philosophy of language. For example, in addition to such foundational questions in the philosophy of language as those concerning the relation between thought and language and the nature of meaning, these thinkers were also deeply interested in such further questions as the following: the extent of linguistic-conceptual variation across historical periods and cultures; the nature of interpretation, and how to accomplish it; the nature of translation, and how to accomplish it; the nature of expression in non-linguistic arts like sculpture, painting, and music, and how to interpret it; the

role of genre in both linguistic and non-linguistic art; a range of ethico-political questions concerning language; and many other fascinating questions as well.

One sometimes hears Anglophone philosophers today sounding the death-knell of philosophy of language as the central core of the discipline of philosophy. This is not too surprising given the largely misguided and severely impoverished stock of ideas that currently constitute philosophy of language in the Anglophone world. One of my more ambitious hopes for these two volumes is that they may help to revive philosophy of language in the Anglophone world by re-injecting into it some of the depth and breadth of the Herderian tradition.

Like the essays in *After Herder*, the essays in the present volume were in many cases originally written as discrete pieces rather than as parts of a whole, and I have attempted to preserve rather than to erase their original autonomy in putting them together here. Consequently, they do not form a continuous narrative, and they sometimes overlap.⁶ Nonetheless, by arranging them in a certain order and including introductory encyclopedia-style essays on each of the main thinkers covered, I have endeavored to produce something that at least approximates a continuous narrative. Consequently, an energetic reader might want to read through the essays in sequence from beginning to end. Alternatively, since each essay has sufficient autonomy to be read by itself, he or she might prefer to “dip” selectively according to interest.

The essays in these two volumes make no claim to exhaust the wealth of the tradition they explore. However, it is my plan to complement them with further essays in the future, and my hope that they may also encourage other philosophers to venture into this extraordinarily rich and underdeveloped territory.

Notes

1. M. Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 683.
2. A. Kenny, *Frege* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. viii.
3. This is not to deny that Frege made any important contributions to the philosophy of language. He did—for example, his clear sense/referent distinction.
4. E. Coseriu, “Zu Hegels Semantik,” *Kwartalnik neofilologiczny*, 24 (1977), p. 185 n. 8.
5. See *After Herder*, Essay 6.
6. For example, Essays 6 and 7 overlap, as do Essays 7 and 9.

PART I
Schlegel

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1

Friedrich Schlegel

Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) was—together with his almost equally important, albeit less original, older brother, August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845)—the main founder of German Romanticism. In addition, he made seminal contributions to hermeneutics, the theory of language, and general aesthetics (as well as other fields). In all of these areas—Romanticism, hermeneutics, the theory of language, and general aesthetics—he was strongly influenced by Herder. Friedrich Schlegel is an “ideas man” rather than a systematic thinker; he frequently changes his mind, and is sometimes inconsistent even at a particular period. But the brilliance and the influence of his ideas make him a thinker of great importance. This essay will give an overview of Schlegel’s thought under the following headings:

1. Intellectual Life
2. The Idea of Romanticism
3. Hermeneutics
4. Translation-Theory
5. General Aesthetics
6. Theory of Language
7. Epistemology and Metaphysics
8. Political Philosophy
9. The Later Schlegel

1. Intellectual Life

Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) was born in Hanover in 1772. His father, Johann Adolf Schlegel (1721–93), was a Protestant pastor and literary theorist, whose ideas are of some significance for his son’s development (for example, he held the interestingly radical view that the number of literary genres that were possible was infinite). Friedrich had several older siblings, but was closest to August Wilhelm, who supported and mentored him in his youth, and was his main intellectual ally thereafter.

After being largely home-schooled by his older brothers (especially August Wilhelm), Friedrich was for a short time apprenticed to a banker, but soon gave this up. In 1788–9 he devoted himself to an intensive reading of Plato in the Greek—a step that proved of great consequence for his subsequent career, both developing his extraordinary talent for languages and introducing him to a philosopher who would have a lasting impact on him. In 1790 he went to Göttingen and then Leipzig in order to study law, but subsequently left law for literature. In 1792 he met Schiller (with whom his relationship would be difficult) and Novalis (with whom he would have an enduring close friendship).

In 1793 Caroline Böhmer, the married daughter of the philologist Michaelis, began to play a large role in the life of Friedrich and his brother August Wilhelm. She had moved to Mainz in 1792, lived there with the radical Georg Forster and his wife, participated in the Mainz rebellion, and had an affair with a French officer. After the collapse of the rebellion she had been imprisoned for her political involvement, and found herself pregnant. August Wilhelm, who had been in love with her before these events, came to the rescue, setting her up in a village near Leipzig for the duration of her pregnancy, where Friedrich visited her regularly, himself becoming enthralled by her. August Wilhelm would eventually marry her in 1796, but she subsequently left him for Schelling (the marriage had broken down by 1800, divorce followed in 1803).

In 1794–6 Friedrich lived in Dresden, where he began an intensive study of Greek literature and visited the city's (reproductions of) ancient sculptures, which had a powerful impact on him. In the winter of 1796 he spent some time in Halle working with the classical philologist F.A. Wolf. In the summer of 1796 he moved to Jena, the great intellectual center of the period, where his brother August Wilhelm and his new wife Caroline settled at about the same time. Friedrich stayed in Jena until the summer of 1797, teaching as a *Privatdozent*. While in Jena he got to know Fichte, Goethe, and Schelling personally, as well as renewing his acquaintance with Schiller, with whom, however, he and his brother soon fell out.

During the period 1788–97 Friedrich complemented his classical and literary studies with an extensive study of contemporary philosophy, including Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Fichte's subjective idealism, Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind* (1794/5), and Schelling's philosophy of nature. He also wrote and published. To this period belongs his important essay *On the Study of Greek Poetry* (mostly written in 1795, but only published in 1797), a work that constitutes a sort of pivot between his early classicism and his eventual romanticism: in its main body he champions the classical against the merely "interesting" (i.e. the romantic), but in a preface written later under the intervening influence of Schiller's *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* (1795) he tends to

reverse that assessment, according the “interesting” (or romantic) equal legitimacy and value. Other significant pieces from this period include *On Diotima* (1795), an essay in a feminist spirit which gives a very favorable interpretation of the depiction of women in Greek literature; the *Essay on the Concept of Republicanism* (1796), a work in political philosophy which champions a radical form of republicanism; and the two “characteristics,” *Georg Forster* and *On Lessing* (both 1797).

In the summer of 1797 Schlegel moved to Berlin, where he lived until 1799. There he became the center of a literary-philosophical group that also included Schleiermacher, Dorothea Veit, and Tieck, thereby in effect establishing German Romanticism as a school (though the name “Romanticism” was not used by the group itself). Especially important for his own intellectual development was the fact that he met and became close friends with Schleiermacher, even sharing rooms with him for a time. This relationship expanded his philosophical horizon to include Schleiermacher’s early synthesis of Kant’s critical philosophy with Spinoza’s monism; gave birth to a joint project of translating the works of Plato (a project which Schlegel did not follow through on, but which Schleiermacher eventually brought to fruition); and after a time encouraged Schlegel to accord more importance to religion, as Schleiermacher did. Less intellectually, but no less personally, important was Schlegel’s encounter with Dorothea Veit, daughter of the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn and wife of a banker. Schlegel began an affair with her that led to her divorce in 1799. They would eventually marry in 1804, and their relationship lasted for the rest of Schlegel’s life. He also at this time met and began to encourage the then still relatively unknown poet Tieck.

This period produced some of Schlegel’s most important writings and publications. These included materials on literary theory, hermeneutics, and translation-theory that were not published until the twentieth century—especially, the *Philosophy of Philology* (1797) and the *Literary Notebooks* (1797–1801). They also included the *History of the Poetry of the Greeks and Romans*, an unfinished but impressively original and learned treatment of its subject published in 1798, which responded to a challenge Herder had issued for someone to do for the history of Greek literature what Winckelmann had already done for the history of Greek art.¹ They also included contributions to the journal *Lyceum*, followed by even more important contributions to the journal *Athenaeum* (1798–1800), a journal which Schlegel founded and wrote for in cooperation with his brother August Wilhelm, Schleiermacher, Novalis, and Tieck. The *Athenaeum* published many of his most important fragments on literary, hermeneutic, and philosophical themes, as well as several of his longer pieces on such themes, including the *Dialogue on Poetry* and

On Incomprehensibility (both 1800). The journal also essentially established German Romanticism as a literary-philosophical movement. Another piece that belongs to this period is Schlegel's main literary work, *Lucinde* (1799)—a novel based on his contemporaneous affair with Dorothea Veit, and notable for its feminist agenda as well as for its (at the time) scandalously frank treatment of sexuality.

In 1799 Schlegel moved back to Jena, where most of the Romantics were now together for a time: besides himself, also August Wilhelm, Caroline, Dorothea, Novalis, Tieck, and Schelling (Schleiermacher was an exception). There he soon earned a doctorate and a *Habilitation* at the University of Jena, and delivered an important series of lectures on Transcendental Philosophy (1800–1). These lectures were attended by Hegel, and evidently had a major impact on the development of Hegel's distinctive version of German Idealism (especially his conception that a radical skepticism plays a fundamental role in philosophy, and his aspiration to synthesize Fichtean subjectivism with Spinozistic monism—both of which positions are anticipated by Schlegel in the lectures). However, as a public event the lectures fell flat (largely due to competition from the charismatic Schelling). This professional disappointment roughly coincided with several personal ones, including the death of Novalis in 1801, the end of Schlegel's friendship with Schleiermacher, and quarrels with his brother August Wilhelm (with whom he reconciled afterwards, but finally broke completely in 1827).

After brief stays in Berlin and Dresden, Schlegel moved to Paris with Dorothea in 1802. On the way there he stopped off in Weimar, where Goethe did him the honor of producing his romantic play *Alarcos* (a work notable for its imitation of the Spanish playwright Calderón, who became increasingly important to the Schlegels as a model of romantic literature from this time on). Despite Goethe's approval and help, the play proved another public failure.

In Paris, Schlegel lectured, mainly on German literature and philosophy, and founded the journal *Europa* (1803–5). He had the good fortune to meet two wealthy brothers who were visiting from Cologne, the Boisserée brothers, to whom he began lecturing in return for payment in 1803. He also deepened his knowledge of visual art, especially through careful study of the works in the Louvre, and began publishing an important series of essays on this subject in *Europa*. In addition, he took up a serious study of Sanskrit and its literature under the guidance of the Scotsman Alexander Hamilton (who had lived in India)—a step that would pay rich dividends a few years later. He also conducted original research on Provençal literature using the manuscripts in the National Library, a subject on which he published a report in *Europa*.

In 1804, with the encouragement, and in the company, of the Boisserée brothers, he moved to Cologne, where, between 1804 and 1807, he delivered

extensive lectures (some public, some private) on philosophy, history, and language and literature. The lectures on philosophy contain both a history of the subject and a system of his own. The lectures on language and literature cover topics in the philosophy of language and linguistics, as well as presenting a mature statement of his literary romanticism. While in Cologne he also continued his study of Sanskrit and its literature (as well as several other subjects). In 1808 he published *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians*, a work grounded in his Sanskrit studies. The work has many flaws when judged from the vantage point of modern scholarship.² But it also made contributions of enormous importance. In particular, it essentially established Sanskrit studies as a discipline, especially in Germany, and it also established the modern discipline of linguistics (for example, by introducing the very idea of “comparative grammar” for the first time).

The period after 1808 was essentially one of intellectual decline (accompanied by a physical-moral decline that included gluttony and heavy drinking). In 1808, while still in Cologne, Schlegel formally converted to Roman Catholicism, thereby fulfilling an intention he had cherished for several years. His religious conversion went hand in hand with a shift to a much more conservative, or even reactionary, political position. In 1809, after years of failing to find secure employment and struggling with financial difficulties, he moved to Vienna, largely in the hope of finding professional and financial security there, though he was also attracted by Austria’s Catholicism and *Kaisertum*, as well as by its history (in which he had developed an interest). Thanks largely to August Wilhelm’s mediation, he soon assumed political posts, first as imperial court secretary to Archduke Charles (in 1809), then as Metternich’s representative to the Diet of Frankfurt (1815–18). He was not successful in these posts, though his time in Frankfurt is noteworthy for agitation on behalf of civil rights for Jews. During this period he also continued to lecture, giving lectures on modern European history (1810), ancient and modern literature (1812), the philosophy of life (1827), the philosophy of history (1828), and the philosophy of language (1828–9). These lectures were delivered before prestigious audiences and were published shortly afterwards to considerable acclaim. But for the most part they lack the originality and the interest of his earlier work. During this period he also founded and edited an anti-Napoleonic newspaper (established in 1809 as part of Austria’s war effort against France), as well as two new journals: the *Deutsches Museum* (1812–13) and the Catholic review *Concordia* (1820–3). His Collected Works were published in ten volumes in 1822–5. As in his early years, he became the center of a group of like-minded (which, though, now meant Catholic and conservative-reactionary) thinkers, including Adam Müller and Franz von Baader. He also developed a strong interest in the occult.

Schlegel died in Dresden in 1829.

2. The Idea of Romanticism

Schlegel is probably best known for having developed a conception of a type of poetry which he contrasts with “classical” poetry as “romantic [*romantisch*],” and for having championed the latter. What is the nature of this distinction, and how did he arrive at his stance towards it?

The distinction itself is already incipiently present in his early work *On the Study of Greek Poetry* (mostly written in 1795; published in 1797), in the form of a sharp contrast between the “classical,” or “objective” vs. the “modern,” or “interesting.” Among the features which he there identifies as distinguishing the “interesting” from the “classical” are unsatisfied longing, a mixing of science and art, a mixing of genres, a reverence for genius, a rejection of what is common in form and content in favor of interesting individuality, dissonance, and rhyme. In the main body of this early work, written in 1795, he strongly valorizes the “classical” at the expense of the “interesting.”³ However, in the same year Schiller published his essay *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry* (1795), which distinguished “sentimental” from “naive” poetry in terms of a strikingly similar set of characteristics (e.g. a longing for the Infinite) but in a spirit of *defending* it as equally valid. And in a preface which Schlegel added to *On the Study of Greek Poetry* subsequently under the avowed impact of Schiller’s essay, he shifted to a much more sympathetic attitude towards “interesting” poetry, according it equal validity and value with “classical.” Subsequently he went on to champion this sort of poetry even more emphatically under the name of “romantic” poetry (for example, in *Athenaeum Fragments*, no. 116).

Why did Schlegel adopt this “romanticism”? The full explanation is quite complicated. Part of it clearly lies in the influence exerted on him by the fact that Schiller had drawn a very similar distinction between types of poetry but had defended the type which he had himself initially viewed negatively.⁴ Another part of the explanation lies in a certain broad tendency to skepticism that came to characterize Schlegel’s epistemology at this period.⁵ But yet another part of it lies in the influence of *Herder*.

Schlegel already looked up to Herder as an expert on aesthetics at the time of writing the main body of *On the Study of Greek Poetry* in 1795. Indeed, he explicitly praises him there in the most glowing terms for expertise in this area (“*Herder joins the most extensive knowledge with the most delicate feeling and the most supple sensitivity*”).⁶ In his *Letters for the Advancement of Humanity* (1793–7) Herder drew a sharp distinction between ancient and modern poetry which turned on many of the same distinguishing features as Schlegel’s “classical” vs. “interesting” distinction—including the prevalence in modern poetry of

unsatisfied longing, a mixing of science and art, a mixing of genres, and rhyme. And in 1796—i.e. precisely the period of his own reversal of attitude—Schlegel wrote a review of the relevant parts of Herder's *Letters* (the 7th and 8th Collections) in which he focused on just this distinction of Herder's.⁷ This review shows that Schlegel's own development of romanticism owed two large debts to Herder.

First, Herder helped Schlegel to realize that his own distinction between "classical" and "interesting" poetry was in effect a distinction between two different but equally well-defined and legitimate genres, and that it was therefore a mistake to measure the one by the constitutive standards of the other as he had initially done. This had long been Herder's standard position concerning different genres (for example, in his seminal essay *Shakespeare* [1773]). And in the *Letters* he had applied it to the distinction between ancient and modern poetry in particular. That this influenced Schlegel in the way just indicated is shown by the fact that he concludes his 1796 review with the following report on precisely that application:

The result (p. 171 and following) denies that the poetry of different times and peoples can be compared, indeed even that there is a universal criterion of evaluation.⁸

Second, when Schlegel (together with his brother August Wilhelm) went on to elaborate the basic conception of "interesting" poetry that he had already delineated in 1795 into the richer conception of "romantic" poetry, it was Herder's *Letters* that supplied him with the main elaborations.⁹ The following are three examples of this: (1) Schlegel eventually came to see the romantic as distinguished from the classical not only by the features already mentioned, but also by its *Christian* character.¹⁰ But Herder had already emphasized this as a distinguishing feature of modern poetry in the *Letters*, and Schlegel had focused on this in his review.¹¹ (2) Schlegel also eventually added as a distinguishing characteristic of romantic poetry a sort of fusion of a striving for a human beloved with a striving for the Infinite (God), associating this fusion with the Provençal troubadours, the Minnesinger, Dante, Petrarch, Cervantes, and Shakespeare.¹² But this whole conception again comes from Herder. For in the *Letters* Herder had prominently discussed precisely such a fusion of a striving for a human beloved with a striving for God as characteristic of precisely the same poets,¹³ and Schlegel had again in his review focused on this aspect of Herder's work.¹⁴ (3) Schlegel also eventually came to regard the novel [*Roman*—conceived rather differently and more broadly than we would conceive it today—¹⁵ as the distinctive romantic [*romantisch*] genre, and to see it as all-embracing in scope, in particular as combining theory with poetry and as subsuming all genres of poetry within

itself.¹⁶ But once again, Herder had already developed precisely such a conception of the novel in the *Letters*.¹⁷

3. Hermeneutics

Another area in which Schlegel makes an important contribution is hermeneutics, or the theory of interpretation. This is not a subject with which he is commonly associated—as, say, Schleiermacher is—since he did not write systematically about it. But his scattered remarks on the subject arguably add up to a contribution that is no less important than Schleiermacher's, indeed even more so. Since I discuss Schlegel's hermeneutics in detail in the following essay, my treatment of it here will be fairly brief and dogmatic.

Two German scholars, Josef Körner and Hermann Patsch, have already made cases for Schlegel's seminal importance in hermeneutics. Their cases essentially take the form of arguing—largely on the basis of evidence supplied by Schlegel's *Philosophy of Philology* from 1797, a set of notes whose composition coincided with the beginning of his close friendship with Schleiermacher in Berlin, and indeed their co-habitation there—that Schlegel anticipated and influenced key moves in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics lectures (which Schleiermacher began to deliver in 1805).

There is much truth in this argument. Schleiermacher clearly looked up to Schlegel at this early period. For example, in 1797 he wrote of Schlegel:

He is a young man twenty-five years old, of such broad knowledge that it is difficult to understand how it is possible to know so much at such a young age, with an original intellect that is far superior to everything here, despite the fact that there is much intelligence and talent here.¹⁸

And while it is often difficult to ascertain intellectual priority between them with any certainty given the meagerness of the available evidence and the fact that this was a period of deliberate “together-philosophy [*Symphilosophie*],” several of the doctrines in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics which Körner credits to Schlegel really do seem to have been more originally Schlegel's: in particular, that the interpreter needs to understand an author better than he understood himself; that it is important for the interpreter to identify an author's psychological development; that the interpreter should interpret the parts of a text in light of the *whole* text; and that the interpreter should reject *philologia sacra*. Moreover, the same is true of several additional doctrines which Patsch credits to Schlegel: in particular, that philology/hermeneutics is not merely a science but an art; that hermeneutics and criticism are interdependent; and that *divina-*

tion plays an essential role in criticism/hermeneutics. Indeed, the same seems to me true of several further doctrines as well: that interpretation typically faces the problem of a deep intellectual difference dividing the interpreter and his age from the author interpreted and his; that in interpretation misunderstanding, rather than being the exception, is the rule; and that, beyond the generic principle of identifying an author's psychological development, the interpreter of a text needs to identify, and trace the unfolding of, an author's "seminal decision [*Keimentschluß*]."¹⁹

Nonetheless, Körner and Patsch's *teleological* picture of Schlegel's importance for hermeneutics—their picture that this lies mainly in his having prepared the ground for Schleiermacher's hermeneutics—seems to me unfortunate. For, as I have argued elsewhere, the importance of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics itself has been somewhat exaggerated: its main claims were heavily anticipated by Ernesti and especially Herder, and to the extent that they do depart from Herder's views usually prove on inspection to be inferior to them.²⁰ And more fundamentally, Schlegel's *main* claim to importance in hermeneutics instead lies in certain contributions he makes which are *not* subsequently to be found in Schleiermacher.

It is this more fundamental point that I would like to develop here—by identifying five ideas (or families of ideas) in Schlegel concerning interpretation which go beyond anything in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, and which are of great intrinsic value. These ideas are all in fact more continuous with Herder than anticipative of Schleiermacher, which is not accidental, since Schlegel from an early period looked up to Herder as an interpreter (as we recently saw from *On the Study of Greek Poetry* [1795/7]).

(1) The first of these ideas—or rather, the first family of ideas—concerns *genre*. Many of the key insights in this area had already been achieved by Herder, in such works as *Shakespeare* (1773) and *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity* (1774). His insights included recognizing the following: (a) the essential role that correctly identifying genre plays in the interpretation not only of literary but also of non-linguistic art; (b) the radical historical mutability of genres; (c) the consequent frequent need for the interpreter to identify unfamiliar, new, and sometimes even uniquely instantiated genres; (d) the likewise consequent frequent need for the interpreter to resist a strong temptation to misidentify a genre by falsely assimilating it to a similar-looking genre from another time or place with which he happens already to be more familiar (e.g. to misidentify the genre of Shakespearean “tragedy” by falsely assimilating it to that of Greek “tragedy”), as well as for the critic to resist a resulting strong temptation to evaluate particular works of literary or non-linguistic art in terms of genre-purposes and -rules which they do not in fact

aspire to realize in the first place, instead of in terms of those which they do; and (e) the once again consequent need for the interpreter or critic to employ a painstaking empirical approach to the determination of genres in order to identify them correctly. A large part of Schlegel's achievement in this area lay simply in retaining these vitally important insights of Herder's. The same was true of his brother August Wilhelm.

But Schlegel (and his brother) also made two important new *applications* of these Herderian insights about genre. One of these concerned the interpretation of Greek tragedy. Before the Schlegels the understanding of Greek tragedy as a genre had been dominated by Aristotle's treatment of it in the *Poetics*, which had been considered virtually sacrosanct not only by the French dramatists and critics but also by their German opponents Lessing and Herder. With the Schlegels there emerged for the first time, in light of a more scrupulous empirical investigation of the surviving Greek tragedies themselves, a realization that Aristotle's treatment of Greek tragedy is in fact at least as much an obstacle to properly understanding it as an aid. By breaking Aristotle's undue influence on the interpretation of Greek tragedy in this way, the Schlegels made possible a recognition of its deeply unfamiliar nature and of the need to rethink this radically. They also themselves began such a rethinking, which subsequently continued with Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* and still continues today (for example, in the work of Vernant, Vidal-Nacquet, Goldhill, and Winkler)—in particular, by incorporating a new recognition of Greek tragedy's deeply religious (Dionysiac) and civic-political nature.

Another new application of Herder's insights about genre concerned the very birth of Romanticism. For, as I mentioned above, when the young Schlegel suddenly changed from his initial classicism concerning the distinction between "classical" and "interesting" (or "romantic") poetry towards a recognition of the equal legitimacy and value of the latter, this change was largely the result of his sudden recognition that the historical shift from the former type of poetry to the latter was basically an example of the sort of historical shift between different but equally well-defined and legitimate genres that Herder had already discussed, and that this precluded any simple valorization of the one at the expense of the other, in particular any negative assessment of the one in terms of the standards of the other.

Finally, Schlegel also made two further significant contributions concerning genre. First, again in continuity with Herder, he recognized that genres (e.g. tragedy) give birth to what theorists would today call genre-modes (e.g. "tragic"), which may then qualify works in other genres (for instance, one could plausibly describe Thomas Hardy's novels as "tragic novels"). Second, he recognized that genres are sometimes systematically interdependent and interdefined. This sort

of situation is fairly obvious in certain cases, for example in the case of parody. But, as Schlegel and his brother August Wilhelm showed, there are also less obvious cases—for example, ancient tragedy and comedy, which (unlike their modern counterparts) are in part defined by their sharp exclusion of each other.

(2) Another important idea concerning interpretation which Schlegel introduced is that texts sometimes express meanings and thoughts, not explicitly in any of their parts, but instead implicitly through their parts and the way in which these are put together to form a whole. For example, he writes in *Athenaeum Fragments*, no. 111:

The teachings that a novel hopes to instill must be of the sort that can be communicated only as wholes, not demonstrated singly and not subject to exhaustive analysis.

He applies this point not only to novels (for example, to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in *On Goethe's Meister* [1798]), but also to the philosophies of Spinoza and Fichte (in *On Lessing* [1797/1801]), and to ancient literature. Accordingly, in the last connection, he writes at *Athenaeum Fragments*, no. 325 (echoing a famous fragment of Heraclitus):

But Apollo, who neither speaks nor keeps silent but intimates, no longer is worshipped, and wherever a Muse shows herself, people immediately want to carry her off to be cross-examined.

(3) Another important contribution Schlegel made to hermeneutics concerns the role of *unconscious* meanings and thoughts in texts, and hence in their interpretation. The general idea that unconscious mental processes occur already had a long history in German philosophy by Schlegel's day: it had been a commonplace among the Rationalists, Kant had been committed to it as well, and so too had Herder, who had moreover discussed it in close connection with questions of authorship and interpretation in *On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul* (1778). However, it was above all Schlegel who developed that general idea into a principle that the interpreter must penetrate beyond an author's conscious meanings and thoughts to discover his unconscious ones as well. Thus he writes in *On Goethe's Meister* that "every excellent work . . . aims at more than it knows"; and at *Athenaeum Fragments*, no. 401 that "in order to understand someone who only partially understands himself, you first have to understand him completely and better than he himself does."

(4) Another important contribution that Schlegel made to hermeneutics concerns the presence of inconsistency and confusion in texts. Ernesti had already encouraged the interpreter to attribute inconsistencies and other forms of confusion to profane texts where appropriate, and Herder had extended that

principle to sacred texts as well. Schlegel accepts Herder's broader version of this principle. But he also places even greater emphasis on it and develops it further: he not only insists that confusion is a common feature of texts and should be recognized when it occurs, but also argues that in such cases the interpreter needs to seek to *understand and explain* it. Hence, in *On Incomprehensibility* (1800) he insists that confusion frequently occurs even in superior texts and needs to be recognized when it does. And as early as 1797 he argues in a note:

In order to understand someone, one must first of all be cleverer than he, then just as clever, and then also just as stupid. It is not enough that one understand the actual sense of a confused work better than the author understood it. One must also oneself be able to know, to *characterize*, and even *construe* the confusion even down to its very principles.

(5) A final important contribution Schlegel made to hermeneutics concerns the interpretation of non-linguistic art. Herder had begun his career, in the *Critical Forests*, holding that non-linguistic art does not express meanings or thoughts at all but is instead merely sensuous in nature. On such a view, the question of *interpreting* it does not even arise. But Herder had subsequently changed his mind about this, instead coming to recognize that non-linguistic art does often express meanings and thoughts, and therefore does need to be interpreted. This later position of Herder's is clearly the correct one. Schlegel deserves credit both for taking it over and for developing it in some insightful ways. (In doing so, he was strongly influenced not only by Herder but also by Wackenroder and Tieck.)

Thus, Schlegel argues unequivocally that non-linguistic art of any importance always does express meanings and thoughts. For example, in the Cologne lectures on philosophy (1804–6) he writes:

If one wished to make mere decoration and charm the purpose of art, art would be ill founded, and the objections of those people who reject it as quite useless entirely justified... But it is an entirely different matter when one makes *meaning* the purpose of art.

And he applies such a position to each of the non-linguistic arts specifically. For instance, he insists in *Athenaeum Fragments*, no. 444 that instrumental music expresses ideas. And in the pieces on visual art which he began writing in Paris in 1802 he insists that it is also visual art's function to express meanings and thoughts—in particular, that the proper function of sculpture is to express ancient myths; and that the proper function of painting and Gothic architecture is again to express meanings and thoughts, but this time ones of a religious, and more specifically Christian, character.

In addition, he develops a series of hermeneutic principles to guide the interpretation of non-linguistic art. Some of these principles are similar to ones that he applies to linguistic texts. For example, he holds that interpretation of visual art from the past faces, and needs to recognize, the problem that its subject-matter is intellectually distant from ourselves; that one of the main ways of solving this problem is through a careful study of *literature* from the visual art's period and place; that the parts of a work of visual art need to be interpreted in light of the whole work; that interpreting visual art requires correctly identifying its genre, and overcoming the obstacles that stand in the way of doing so; that it is vitally important when interpreting a work of visual art to discern its *holistic* meanings; and that the interpretation of non-linguistic art needs to include paying attention to its author's *unconscious* meanings.

But Schlegel also develops a more distinctive hermeneutic principle to guide the interpretation of non-linguistic art: a theory of a sort of *symbolism* that is distinctive of such art and by means of which it conveys its meanings and thoughts. For example (to begin with a simple case), he points out convincingly that painters such as Correggio often use light and dark colors to symbolize good and evil respectively. Again (but less simply), he argues plausibly that there is an important difference between portrait paintings which have a plain background (e.g. Holbein's) and those which have a landscape as background (e.g. Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*), since in the latter the landscape symbolically conveys (or at least clarifies) the inner state of mind of the person portrayed. Again (and more elaborately still), he cogently identifies a whole series of features of the architecture of the Gothic cathedral which symbolically convey meanings and thoughts—including, for example, the shapes of the cross and the rose, symbolic respectively of (Christ's) death and the life to come.

4. Translation-Theory

Another area in which Schlegel makes a relatively neglected contribution is the theory of translation. The generation before Schlegel's in Germany had already contained great translators and translation-theorists: especially Herder (an important translator, especially in his *Popular Songs* [*Völklieder*] [1774/8], and a seminal theorist of translation in his *Fragments on Recent German Literature* [1767–8]) and Voss (the great translator of Homer). In Schlegel's own generation the greatest translators and translation-theorists were his brother August Wilhelm (who, among numerous other translations of literature from several languages, in 1797 began publishing his epoch-making series of translations of

Shakespeare, as well as theorizing deeply about translation in lectures and essays) and his friend Schleiermacher (who became Germany's great translator of Plato, as well as authoring what is arguably the most important work on the theory of translation ever written, *On the Different Methods of Translation* [1813]). However, Friedrich Schlegel himself made a significant contribution in this area as well.

After moving to Berlin in 1797 and befriending Schleiermacher, Schlegel shared equal responsibility with him for developing the project of translating the works of Plato (albeit that only Schleiermacher carried the project to fruition). In addition, some of Schlegel's fragmentary writings from this period are concerned with the theory of translation—especially, his *Philosophy of Philology* (1797) and fragments from the late 1790s now published in *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, volume 18. Furthermore, the Cologne lectures on German language and literature from 1807 contain comments concerning meter and its reproduction in another language, while *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808) contains translations of Sanskrit texts as well as a modicum of theorizing about translation.

From these materials it is possible to reconstruct the main lines of Schlegel's own early theory of translation, as follows: (1) The modern translator usually confronts the problem of an intellectual gulf dividing him and his culture from an ancient author and his: "the immeasurable difference . . . , the quite distinctive nature of antiquity," "the *absolute* difference between the ancient and the modern."²¹ The gulf in question consists first and foremost in conceptual incommensurability, but also in a sharp divergence of metrical principles.²² (2) This makes translation extremely difficult, even to the point of being strictly speaking impossible: "Whether translations are *possible* is a question no one has worried about."²³ (3) However, the proper response to this situation is not to despair, but instead to see the task of translation as one of endless approximation: "Every translation is an indeterminate, infinite task."²⁴ (4) The translator who confronts an intellectual gulf of this sort faces a choice between either attempting to reproduce the original meaning and music of the source text faithfully or undertaking to transform it: "Every translation is a transplanting or a transforming or both."²⁵ How can translation of the former type be achieved? (5) This requires that the translator have hermeneutic (or "philological") expertise: "Translation is obviously something [philological];"²⁶ "Translation belongs entirely to philology, is a thoroughly philological art."²⁷ It also requires that he be artistic.²⁸ (6) In terms of specific approach, it requires that he modify the word-usages and the music features of the target language in order to approximate those of the source language as closely as possible. Thus in the *Philosophy of Philology* Schlegel remarks that

“one should translate in order to mold the modern languages classically.”²⁹ And later, in *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians*, he argues that in translations of Sanskrit texts into German the German language should “mold itself [*sich anschmiegen*]” to the original Sanskrit and should attempt to reproduce the meters found in the latter.³⁰ (7) Besides its primary virtue of reproducing the original text as accurately as possible, this approach also has the virtue of enriching the target language both conceptually and musically. Schlegel implies this when he says that “one should translate in order to mold the modern languages classically.” And he also makes the point in a more general way: “Each translation is actually language-creation.”³¹ (8) Moreover, this sort of translation elevates the translator to the rank of an artist: “Only the translator is a linguistic artist.”³²

All of these principles are both continuous with Herder’s seminal theory of translation in the *Fragments on Recent German Literature* and anticipative of Schleiermacher’s theory of translation in *On the Different Methods of Translation*. Given the meagerness of the relevant textual evidence, and the non-proprietary spirit of “together-philosophy [*Symphilosophie*]” in which Schlegel and Schleiermacher worked during the relevant period, it is hard to be sure which of them adopted and developed these ideas about translation from Herder first. However, it seems likely that it was in many if not most cases Schlegel, and that to this extent much of the credit for the eventual emergence of Schleiermacher’s sophisticated theory of translation in *On the Different Methods of Translation* belongs to him.

5. General Aesthetics

Aesthetics, in the sense of the theory of both literary and non-linguistic art, is arguably Friedrich Schlegel’s (and his brother August Wilhelm’s) main and best-known area of endeavor. The discussion of it that follows can therefore only be selective.

Several parts of Schlegel’s aesthetic theory have already been mentioned. One consists in his basic romanticism: his conception of a sharp distinction between classical and romantic poetry, and his valorization of the latter as much as, or even more than, the former. Another part is his theory of genre, as it concerns both literary and non-linguistic art. Yet another part is his conception that, like literature, non-linguistic art expresses meanings and thoughts, and therefore requires interpretation, together with his hermeneutic principles for interpreting it. As we have seen, Schlegel’s aesthetic theory is heavily indebted to Herder in all these areas.

But Schlegel's aesthetics also includes many further parts as well. One of these lies in his strong tendency until about 1800 to valorize art over other areas of culture, such as religion and philosophy. This tendency contrasts with a *religious* form of romanticism which emerged at around that time, above all in Schleiermacher's *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799) (a work that was indeed to some extent directed against Schlegel's aestheticism), and in Novalis's *Christianity or Europe* (also written and circulated in 1799, though not formally published until 1826). However, following the composition of these two works, and under their influence, Schlegel himself shifted ground, coming to accord religion a much more important cultural position in his *Ideas* (1800), and continuing to do so thereafter. He also implicitly raised the relative cultural standing of philosophy, especially in his 1800–1 lectures on Transcendental Philosophy and his Cologne lectures on philosophy from 1804–6.

Another of Schlegel's principles in aesthetics concerns a slightly different aspect of the relationship between art and religion. In a broad sense of the term "religious," Schlegel's ideal of romantic art was arguably itself religious from the start, namely in virtue of its central principle of a striving for the Infinite.³³ Accordingly, he already writes in a fragment from the period of the *Athenaeum*: "The poetic ideal . . . = God."³⁴ And as his ideal of romantic art developed over time, it increasingly became religious in a narrower sense as well: Christian, and indeed specifically Catholic. Thus he already writes in a precocious fragment from 1799: "Art aims at the last Messiah, and is hence Catholic."³⁵ And this insistence on the religious, Christian, Catholic nature of romantic art is emphatic in the pieces on visual art that he began to publish in 1802.³⁶

Turning to further topics: Schlegel's treatments of poetry and visual art are parallel in many ways. Beyond the ways already mentioned, such as his recognition of the role that genre plays in both, and his position that both express meanings and thoughts and hence require interpretation, the following ways are also noteworthy: Just as in poetry he comes to reject Weimar classicism, with its associated paganism and valorization of epic poetry and tragedy as genres, in favor of romanticism, with its associated Christianity and valorization of the novel as a genre,³⁷ so in his treatment of visual art he comes to reject Winckelmann's and Weimar's classicism (the latter represented by Goethe's *Propyläen*), with its associated paganism and valorization of the genre of sculpture, in favor of romanticism, with its associated Christianity and valorization of the genre of painting.³⁸ Just as in poetry he looks to poets from the medieval and early modern periods such as the Provençal troubadours, the Minnesinger, Dante, Petrarch, Cervantes, Shakespeare, and (eventually) Calderón as the main representatives of romantic poetry,³⁹ so in visual art he looks to painters from the medieval and early modern periods such as Correggio, Raphael, and Dürer as the main representatives of

romantic visual art.⁴⁰ Just as in poetry he sees the novel as a sort of super-genre that incorporates and transcends all the others, so in visual art he posits a type of painting (“symbolic” painting) that incorporates and transcends all the others.⁴¹

But despite this parallelism, Schlegel also posits a sort of hierarchy of the arts which locates poetry at the top. More specifically, his hierarchy places sculpture lowest, music higher, painting and architecture higher still, and poetry highest of all. He appeals to two main criteria in order to justify such a ranking: First, it reflects an ascent from a predominance of the merely sensuous (in sculpture) to a predominance of feeling or emotion (in music) to a predominance of meaning (in painting, architecture, and poetry).⁴² Second, unlike the other arts, poetry is a universal art that is implicated in all the others:

Poetry is alone among all the arts a, so to speak, universal accompanying art [*Mitkunst*] which joins together all the others.⁴³

Schlegel’s picture here is nuanced, though. It is not a matter of sculpture *only* being sensuous; music *only* emotional; painting, architecture, and poetry *only* meaningful. Rather, each factor is involved in each type of art, but in different proportions (hence my choice of the word “predominance” above). Thus, as we have seen, Schlegel ascribes meanings and thoughts to *all* the arts, including the lower ones in his hierarchy: sculpture expresses myths, instrumental music expresses ideas, etc. And accordingly, he sees poetry, with its meanings and thoughts, as a universal art that permeates all the other arts as well. Likewise, he understands feeling or emotion to be shared by all the arts. Hence in the *Lectures on the History of Literature* he implies that even the high art of architecture expresses emotion, and moreover that it must do so in order to be real art:

How excellent soever the style of a building may be, if it convey no meaning, express no *sentiment*, it cannot strictly be considered a creation of Art.⁴⁴

Indeed, he develops two interesting and parallel theories positing natural correlations between particular sounds and particular emotions (this is relevant to both instrumental music and poetry),⁴⁵ and between particular colors and particular emotions (this is relevant to painting).⁴⁶ Likewise, he would, I think, say that sensuousness is involved in all of the arts to one degree or another.

Finally, two further features of Schlegel’s aesthetics also deserve mention. One of these concerns his attitude to *nature* and the *natural*. If one’s conception of “romanticism” is based mainly on English models, such as Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads*, one is likely to associate romanticism with a valorization of the natural at the expense of the artificial. However, as Arthur Lovejoy has pointed out, this is one of the axes along which romanticism as a whole turns out to be a very contradictory movement.⁴⁷ And accordingly, Schlegel’s

romanticism in fact espouses virtually the opposite principle. Recall here that his romanticism largely had its origins in Schiller's naive vs. sentimental distinction and in Schiller's valorization of the *latter* (not the former). The same contrary spirit emerges in Schlegel's own characterizations of romantic poetry as "poetry of poetry," a set of endlessly reflecting mirrors, a fusion of poetry with philosophy or science, and so on. It also manifests itself in such positions as his rejection of the valorization of the natural that occurs in pastoral poetry and in Rousseau's theories.⁴⁸

Finally, like several of his recent predecessors and contemporaries, Schlegel holds that true art can only come from the artistic *genius*—in the sense of someone who in an individualistic way transcends existing rules rather than following them, and who also achieves a certain sort of authenticity (the contrasting vices that Schlegel identifies here are, respectively, imitation and mannerism). In addition, he considers the historical emergence of genius to be something that is recalcitrant to explanation.⁴⁹

6. Theory of Language

Schlegel is also extremely important for his contributions to the theory of language. His main work in this area is *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808).⁵⁰ This work is profoundly indebted to Herder, both for its interest in India and for its general views about language.⁵¹ But it also goes far beyond Herder in many ways. Let us consider its contributions roughly in order of increasing importance.

To begin with, the work contains a mildly interesting theory of the origin of language. This theory is heavily indebted to Herder's, though not identical with it. Unlike Herder, Schlegel distinguishes sharply between two kinds of languages: "organic," or inflected, languages, such as Sanskrit, and "mechanical," or uninflected, languages, such as Chinese. Again unlike Herder, he explains the latter languages' origins naturalistically in terms of animal cries and onomatopoeia. However, it is the former languages that he considers to be most important. And *like* Herder, he gives a naturalistic explanation of the origin of these in terms of their interdependence and coevalness with human awareness [*Besonnenheit*], while also imputing to them an ulterior source in God—which was precisely the account that Herder had given of the origin of *all* language in his *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772).⁵²

A more important contribution achieved by Schlegel's work lies in the fact that it essentially founded modern Sanskrit studies, at least in Germany. Under the work's influence, Schlegel's older brother August Wilhelm went on to