Humanities 4:
Lecture 24

Friedrich Schlegel’s Ideas
Biography

- 1772-1829
- Brother of August Wilhelm
- Editor of Athenaeum
- Conversion to Catholicism and conservative politics
- Specialized in history, literary theory and Asian languages
Themes in Ideas

- Philosophy-poetry-religion
- Religion (Schleiermacher)
- Creativity/Genius/Wit
- Nature
- Male-female
- Death
- Style
- Nationalism
- Relations to other figures
Philosophy, Poetry, Religion

- Partially distinct
  - “Poetry and philosophy are … different spheres” (46).
  - “Where philosophy stops, poetry must begin” (48).
  - “Religion and morals are symmetrically opposed, like poetry and philosophy” (67).
  - “The life and energy of poetry consists in … tearing off a piece of religion, and then returning into itself by absorbing it. The same is true for philosophy” (25).

- Religion is most fundamental (13, 18, 34, 79, 117).
  - “Religion is not merely one part of education, … but the centre of all others, everywhere the first and highest, the absolutely original” (14).
  - “Religion is the centripetal and centrifugal power of the human spirit, and what unites both” (31).
Religion

• Fundamental similarities to Schleiermacher
  - “Only in relation to the infinite is there meaning and purpose” (3).
  - “Eternal life and the invisible world is to be sought only in God. All spirits dwell in him; he is … the only infinite fullness” (6).
  - “Only he who has his own religion, an original view of the infinite, is an artist (13).
  - “Religion is absolutely unfathomable. Everywhere one can probe deeper into it ad infinitum” (30).
  - “We do not see God; but we see the divine everywhere. We see it … most properly in the heart of a sensitive soul or in the depths of living human creation” (44).
Creativity/Genius/Wit

• Creativity
  - “Of what I am proud…? Of that decision that eternally separates me and isolates me from everything common” (136).
  - “To give the league of artists a specific end means to replace an eternal union with a meager institute” (49).

• Genius
  - “Every complete person has genius. True virtue is geniality” (36).

• Wit
  - “Wit is the appearance, the external flash, of fantasy. Hence its divinity” (26).
Nature

- “Beauty is what reminds us of nature, and therefore excites the feeling of the infinite fullness of life. Nature is organic, and the highest beauty is therefore eternal” (86).

- “Man is nature’s creative backwards glance upon itself” (28).

- “To have genius is the natural condition of mankind; but it too must come healthy from the hands of nature” (19).
Contrast between Men & Women

- Differences, but both are valued (equally?)
  - Men are capable of genius and nobility, women of love and beauty. (116)
  - Women need poetry less, because “their inner essence is poetry” (127).
  - “Mysteries are feminine. They veil themselves gladly, but they want to be seen and solved” (128).
Death (and Life)

- “Only in the midst of death is the spark of eternal life ignited” (131).

- Life and death, as opposites, entail each other.

- Novalis says: “Life is the beginning of death. Life is for the sake of death. Death is at the same time an ending and a beginning, a parting and closer reunion with the self.

- Through death purification is completed” (Pollen, 14).

- Death is thus as positive as life.

- Death is introduced in the context of sacrifice, which is explained as “the destruction of the finite because it is finite.”
• Fragment
• Mystery/Mysticism
• Rhetorical Devices
  - Allegory
    • “A priest is whoever lives only in the invisible world, and for whom everything has the truth of an allegory” (2).
  - Paradox
    • “It is characteristic of humanity that it must rise above humanity” (21).
    • “Morality without a sense for paradox is vulgar” (76).
  - Irony
    • “Irony is the clear consciousness of eternal agility, of the infinitely abundant chaos” (69).
Nationalism

- Romanticism was originally very much a German movement, centered in Jena and Berlin.
  - Unsurprising given emphasis on individuality.
  - Nationalistic spirit (to draw upon)
- Emphasis on art and science for their own sake. (120, 126)
Schlegel on Others

- Schleiermacher
  - Repeated positive references
- Lessing
  - New gospel (and Spinozism)
- Novalis
  - “Do not squander your faith and love on the political world, but sacrifice your inner self to the world of science and art in a holy firestorm of eternal creation” (106).
  - Addendum