

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.”

Style

- 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