

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

Frederic Will, Ph.D.

GERMAN ESSAY

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Overview

Medieval German Literature

Overview

The origins of German literature, unlike the origins of the Romance literatures, retreat into the margins of the Roman Empire. In his *Germania*, the Roman historian Tacitus provides us with our first extensive account of the German tribe, the Germani, and gives us the sense of a warlike but socially organized people, whose strength and virtues were in some ways to be emulated by the increasingly decadent Romans. From that first semi primitive exposure to the great world, to the first individual voices of German literature, would require a millenium of tribal jostling, linguistic development and branching out from the native Germanic tongues—which were totally foreign to the Latin language families—and arguably a synthesis of pagan with the gradually adopted Christian culture, from which would come the rich and original textures of the literature we now consider German.

The first genres to meet us, in this new literary world, are epic and lyric poetry. The epic tradition in Middle High German, the Classical period (1180-1250), is of two distinct kinds: court and popular. The court epic is written for the nobility—with noble patronage—and is accordingly polite and cultivated, frequently sprinkling French words; the tales that are told typically—as in the epic *Parzival*, by Wolfram von Eschenbach (1170-1220)—concern chivalry, and the high honor and courtliness culture implied by chivalry. The popular epic tradition, exemplified by *The Niebelungenlied* (1200 A.D.), blends ancient Germanic tales of warfare, revenge, and court life, with an overlay of Christian values, which blend forcefully, providing a 'folk epic' closer to Homer's work than was anything produced out of the court tradition. The traditions of lyric poetry, in mediaeval Germany, are preserved from two major groups: Minnesingers, 'singers about love,' who emulated French troubador poetry, and whose greatest exemplar was Walther von der Vogelweide (1170-1230 A.D.); and Mastersingers, who flourished in the 14th and 15th centuries, were best represented by Hans Sachs, and who were an organized guild of professional traveling poets. Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) will stand in here for the brilliance of the German mystical tradition, which expressed itself in a poetry that qualifies it as the highest literature.

Meister Eckhart

The challenge of Eckhart. The Christian theme foregrounded in *Parzival*, and more or less shallowly foregrounded in the poetry of a minnesinger like Walther von der Vogelweide, is evidence of the subtle pervasion of the new faith into a German culture which is still, in the thirteenth century, in transition from a version of the Middle Ages in which are embedded many elements of the ancient pagan world. The monastic tradition still provides the energy for the evolution of the Christian perspective in Germany.

Meister Eckhart. Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) was born of a simple tradesperson family in Thuringia, during a period when a vocation in the church was one of the most promising career paths, but one made especially difficult at Eckhart's time, by the split in the Catholic Church, whereby the power of the Papacy had shifted to Avignon, in France. At the age of eighteen Eckhart entered the Dominican order and became a monk. By this move he made a career decision which would lead to an active institutional role, in his order, conflict of life importance for the monk, and adventures in theological/philosophical thought which would render Eckhart a figure of influence not only in German religious history but in the wider history of contemporary world thought. He would, through his sermons, philosophical position papers, and public debates, become a widely known representative of his order, twice invited to a seminary lectureship in Paris, an honor previously bestowed only on Thomas Aquinas.

Meister Eckhart's career. As a member of the Dominican order Eckhart is soon recognized as of remarkable intellectual power. He is sent to lecture in Paris—a center of high intellectual debate among theologians, the intellectual elite of the time—then moves from one seminary or pulpit to another, engaging all the time more deeply with the thought of his time. And he is concerned not only with theology, in which his thought grows increasingly bold, but with administrative matters, like convent management, which kept him fully involved in the world. As he develops his own original thought, however, he moves increasingly into considerations which before he knows it—indeed we don't know just when—begin to attract serious critical concern from certain of his superiors.

The thought of Eckhart. It is impossible to encapsulate the metaphysical thought that Eckhart now enters in his forceful determination to further the speculative traditions Catholic orthodoxy found itself in. We know that by 1326 some of Eckhart's superiors have begun to support an inquisitorial campaign against his teaching and writings. The essence of their concern is the implication, considered embedded in his developing thoughts, that a direct and 'mystical' access to God is possible, and is grounded in the nature of our thought. The implications of such a position, for the organized church, are plainly immense. By this kind of suggestion Eckhart would seem to take the experience of God directly onto himself, and, although being a monk, and belonging to the Church, he would seem to be adopting an independent, directly mystical relation to God, which would bypass the institution of the Church. (Martin Luther, the driving force behind Protestantism, is one of many who were struck with the force of Eckhart's thought, and its relevance to the simplification of the Church.)

Charges against Eckhart. When one enters the charges against Eckhart, however, the entire matter appears highly complex, and there are reasons to suppose that the inquisition into Eckhart's thought, before the conclusion of which he died, was driven by inner factional rivalries as much as by genuine intellectual insight. The charge against him is based on an interpretation of his view of the nature of thinking, which Eckhart thought to be presuppositionless, identical with its own thought, while God, as the ultimate thought, was the base from which we are as we begin to think. Whether or not this perspective entailed assuming a direct, mediation-free address to God remains open to discussion to this day.

Reading

Primary Source Reading

Davies, Oliver, *Selected Writings: Meister Eckhart*, 1996.

Secondary Source Reading

Turner, Denys, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Religion*, 1995.

Further Reading

Davies, Oliver, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian*, 1991.

Original language reading

Ruh, Kurt, *Meister Eckhart. Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker*, 1989.

Suggested paper topics

Reconstruct, in your own language, the thinking of Meister Eckhart which brought down on him at least the initiation of inquisitorial charges. Can you see the view point of the administrative forces aligned against Eckhart? Can you understand the defense Eckhart gave of himself? What is that defense?

Does the Christian thinking of Meister Eckhart seem to you to resemble the thinking of the German literary thinkers one encounters among the minnesingers or in Parzifal? Does Eckhart, for that matter, seem to you have a literary imagination as well as a strong philosophical mind? Would that be one reason for his continuing influence, to our day, over writers?

EXCERPT http://catholicprimer.org/eckhart/eckhart_sermons.pdf

Sin is also an eternity of hell, for eternity is in the will, and were it not in the will, it would not be in the consciousness. Now, people say when they commit sin that they do not intend to do so always; they intend to turn away from sin. That is just as though a man were to kill himself and suppose that he could make himself alive again by his own strength. That is, however, impossible; but to turn from sin by one's own power and come to God is still much more impossible. Therefore, whosoever is to turn from sin and come to God in His heavenly kingdom must be drawn by the heavenly Father with the might of His divine power. The Father also draws the Son who comes to help us with His grace, by stimulating our free will to

turn away from, and hate sin, which has drawn us aside from God, and from the immutable goodness of the Godhead. Then, if she is willing, He pours the gift of His grace into the soul, which renounces all her misery and sin, and all her works become living. Now, this grace springs from the centre of Godhead and the Father's heart, and flows perpetually, nor ever ceases, if the soul obeys His everlasting love. Therefore He saith in the prophets: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Out of the overflow of His universal love He desires to draw all to Himself, and to His Only-begotten Son, and to the Holy Ghost in the joy of the heavenly kingdom. Now, we should know that before our Lord Jesus Christ was born, the Heavenly Father drew men with all His might for five thousand, two hundred years; and yet, as far as we know, brought not one into the heavenly kingdom. So, when the Son saw that the Father had thus strongly drawn men and even wearied Himself, and yet not succeeded, He said to the Father: "I will draw them with the cords of a man." It was as though He said, "I see well, Father, that Thou with all Thy might, canst not succeed, therefore will I myself draw them with the cords of a man." Therefore the Son came down from heaven, and was incarnate of a Virgin, and took upon Him all our bodily weaknesses, except sin and folly, into which Adam had cast us; and out of all His words and works and limbs and nerves, He made a cord, and drew us so skillfully, and so heartily, that the bloody sweat poured from His sacred Body. And when He had drawn men without ceasing for three and thirty years, He saw the beginnings of a movement and the redemption of all things that would follow.

16th Century German Literature

As we enter the sixteenth century we must note that while England, France, the Netherlands, Spain and Italy were by this stage moving vigorously into the rediscovery of the Classics, and the power of their Romanic tradition, the Germans—but one cannot refer to them as such, for they were still four centuries away from nationhood—were barely starting to harvest their cultural traditions. And yet, complexly enough, there was cultural movement, from with the 'Germany' of the sixteenth century, which was to have exceptionally far reaching effect on subsequent centuries throughout Europe, indeed throughout the world.

From the very first, the humanist movement took a unique direction in north-central Europe. In the first place the revival of classical literature, especially Latin, was for Italy—and to some extent for France and Spain—a revival of its own past glories, while for Germany the Renaissance was of foreign origin. Furthermore humanism appealed primarily to the intellectual elite in Germany, who could speak Greek and Latin, whereas it appealed to a far wider audience in the countries where the languages were derived from Latin. Instead of an Italianate Renaissance, it might be said, Germany turned with fervor toward a kind of religious Renaissance, the Reformation.

It should not, though, be assumed that humanism made no headway in Germany. Erasmus of Rotterdam (1455-1522) and others became great scholars of classical languages. The invention of the printing press, in the mid-15th century, did much to stimulate reading and learning, and at least fifteen universities were founded in Germany between 1538-1545 A.D. Martin Luther himself was a friend to classical learning, except where it clashed with his religious beliefs.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther. With Martin Luther, born more than a century after Meister Eckhart, the 'new modern world' began to include significant new perspectives in religion. While Eckhart, remaining orthodox, opened the soul to new kinds of direct confrontation with the God within, Luther went farther, and much more publically, toward modifying public understandings of the Christian enterprise. In a word he opened a movement toward reform, in the Catholic Church, which was to have widespread effect on European, we might say world, culture to this day.

The Reformation. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was born in Eisleben, the son of a miner, was sent to primary school where he learned the trivium—grammar, rhetoric, and logic; a combination he found equivalent to Hell and Purgatory combined, then entered an Augustinian priory as a monk, in 1505, and three years later accepted a Professorship in theology at Wuerttemberg. (In other words he, like Eckhart or Saint Augustine, was academically precocious.) From this significant post he three years later paid a

visit to Rome, which was to be influential for him. He was shocked by the corruption of the clergy, and inwardly formulated careful resentments against the intrusion of the Papal world onto the simple message of Christ. For this priest professor, the turning point was encountering head on the 'sales of indulgences,' which were as he saw it being peddled by the Catholic hierarchy—in particular by one Dominican bigwig, Johann Tetzel-- for such purposes as beefing up the building fund for St. Peter's Cathedral. (The galling instance was the monetary sale to parishioners, by the priesthood, of remissions from time due to be spent in Purgatory.) The events consequent on Luther's new perception, and rebellion, were to be the first effective steps toward 'reform' within Christianity, and though reformers like Jan Hus had preceded Luther, and paid for it with their lives, the Luther world was in significant ways more flexible toward individual expression than had been the late mediaeval world of Eckhart.

Luther's boldness and excommunication. In 1517 Luther reached some kind of expressive crisis, in one way or another 'posted his 95 theses' on church and religious matters, for all members of his order to read. Whether or not the posting was done on the Cathedral door is unclear, and is part of the personal mythology that surrounds many of Luther's actions—like throwing an inkwell and pen at the Devil. The upshot of the posting, for sure, was rapid retribution from the Church hierarchy. In 1520 Pope Leo X demanded that Luther retract all his writings to date—they were already voluminous; both as prof and priest Luther was prolific—and on being rejected the Holy Roman Emperor stepped in and excommunicated Prof. Luther. At this point, not only forbidden the rites of the Church, but considered an outlaw, Luther was saved from serious punishment by a cadre of his supports, especially his influential religious friend, Philip Melancthon, and was spirited away (in a cloak and dagger intervention) to the Castle of the Wartburg in Thuringia, where he was safe and protected. It was in that setting that he started to undertake his translation of the Bible into vernacular German, an achievement of vast importance to the German language, to its literary vigor, and to world culture.

Luther's later life. Luther's later life is one of vast productivity, as he began to concentrate on the creative religious works that have given their meaning to the Reformation. It must first be said that he renounced his monasticism (1525) and that in 1530 he married a former nun. In 1535 he and many fellow spirited friends founded the Augsburg Confession, in which they formally abandoned Catholicism. Among the many powerful literary texts Luther left behind him were a rich variety of prose tracts and sermons, vigorous in language and thought, and a collection of some thirty seven hymns, which remain as lasting treasures of Christian worship.

Reading

Primary Source Reading

Dillenberger, John, Martin *Luther: Selections from his Writings*, 1958. (Reprint updates; outstanding.)

Secondary Source Reading

Erickson, Eric, *Young Man Luther*, 1953 (A towering classic of insight.)

Further Reading

Oberman, Heiko, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, 2006.

Original language reading

Arnold, Heinz Ludwig, ed. *Martin Luther*, 1983.

Suggested paper topics

Luther was born more than two hundred years after Meister Eckhart. Please indicate some of the major differences between the two thinkers as those differences relate to the conception of God. (Both men were critical of the organized Church, though one remained within it, while Luther staged a 'rebellion.') Do the differences in their views of God reflect the huge cultural differences that were occurring in Germany in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries?

Luther's translation of the Bible into German was immensely influential, as was the King James version of the same book into English, a century later. Why was a Bible translation a text of such great potential cultural importance? Luther's contemporary, Erasmus (next entry), was famed for his translations of the New Testament into both Greek and Latin. What would you see as the motivation of such a herculean effort? Whom would Erasmus reach by that work?

Excerpt Martin Luther Table Talk <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/9841/9841-h/9841-h.htm>

Proofs that the Bible is the Word of God.

That the Bible is the Word of God, said Luther, the same I prove as followeth. All things that have been and now are in the world, also how it now goeth and standeth in the world, the same was written altogether particularly at the beginning, in the First Book of Moses concerning the Creation. And even as God made and created it, even so it was, even so it is, and even so doth it stand to this present day. And although King Alexander the Great, the kingdom of Egypt, the empire of Babel, the Persian, Grecian, and Roman Monarchs, the Emperors Julius and Augustus, most fiercely did rage and swell against this Book, utterly to suppress and destroy the same, yet notwithstanding, they could prevail nothing; they are all gone and vanished; but this Book, from time to time, hath remained, and will remain unremoved, in full and ample manner, as it was written at the first. But who kept and preserved it from such great and raging power; or, Who defendeth it still? Truly, said Luther, no human creature, but only and alone God himself, who is the right Master thereof; and it is a great wonder that it hath been so long kept and preserved, for the devil and the world are great enemies unto it. The devil doubtless hath destroyed many good books in the Church, as he hath rooted out and slain many saints, concerning whom we have now no knowledge. But, no thanks unto him, the Bible he was fain to leave unmeddled with. In like manner Baptism, the Sacrament, and the Office of Preaching have remained among us against the power of many tyrants and heretics that have opposed the same. These our Lord God hath kept and maintained by his special strength. Homer, Virgil, and suchlike are profitable and ancient books; but, in comparison of the Bible, they are nothing to be regarded.

By whom and at what Times the Bible was translated.

Two hundred and forty-one years before the humanity of Christ, the Five Books of Moses, and the Prophets, were translated out of the Hebrew into the Greek tongue by the Septuagint Interpreters, the seventy doctors or learned men then at Jerusalem, in the time of Eleazar the High-priest, at the request of Ptolemeus Philadelphus, King of Egypt, which King allowed great charges and expenses for the translating of the same.

Then, one hundred and twenty-four years after the birth of Christ, his death and passion, the Old Testament was translated out of Hebrew into Greek by a Jew, named Aquila (being converted to the Christian faith), in the time of Hadrian the Emperor.

Fifty and three years after this Aquila, the Bible was also translated by Theodosius.

In the three-and-thirtieth year after Theodosius, it was translated by Symmachus, under the Emperor Severus.

Eight years after Symmachus, the Bible was also translated by one whose name is unknown, and the same is called the Fifth Translation.

Erasmus

Desiderius Erasmus. Desiderius Erasmus, 'the crowning glory of Christian Humanists,' was born in the late 1460's, in Rotterdam. (German literature? Given the proximity of German to Dutch, and the porous proximity of Germany and Holland, in the Renaissance, we might call Erasmus a representative of Germanic rather than German literature. His regional greatness, in any case, ensures his position in the present encyclopedia of German literature.). Orphaned—his parents never married, and remained a lifelong source of shame to Erasmus—Erasmus grew up in poverty, yet thanks to his exceptional ability he qualified for an outstanding primary education. (His school was the first pre University school in Europe at which Greek was taught, and Erasmus' total familiarity with those two languages, in which he did most of his writing, began at this stage.) By a natural course, given his remarkable gifts, Erasmus took his vows and was ordained at the age of 25, was next entered into an Augustinian monastery, in which he was quickly disgusted, he says, by the crude manners of the monks. Through the intervention of the Bishop of Combray, Erasmus was permitted to leave the cloister, while of course still in full Catholic communion as priest, and to start on what would be a lifetime course of travels, during which he lectured and resided regularly at the best of European Universities, but meantime retained his cherished role as an independent scholar.

Life of an independent scholar. An independent, Erasmus was to write incessantly, and voluminously, and to disseminate his ideas widely among the elite of what intellectual environment he was traversing. The ideas he disseminated were those of a humane scholar, ever more aware that he was living through a period of culture-shaping importance—we would later call it the Reformation—but refusing to take a militant stance in the movement. (Erasmus turned away from the Augsburg Confession in which Luther and Melancthon, and other dissident dignitaries of the German church abjured Catholicism, and remained true to his own priesthood.) It was this independent but faithful position that Erasmus maintained, through a seventy year life of writing, teaching, and scholarship.

Erasmus travels and writes abroad. In 1492 Erasmus went to study at the University of Paris. Shortly after he accepted an invitation to teach at the University of Cambridge, where he occupied the Chair of Divinity, and collaborated on theological texts and issues with many of the outstanding intellectuals in Britain. (He complained of British weather and ale, and that there was not sufficient wine to reduce his aches and pains, but he remained.

Reading

Primary source reading

Collected Works of Erasmus, 1974-. (Ongoing project, University of Toronto Press.)

Secondary source reading

Betenholz, Peter, *Encounter with a radical Erasmus. Erasmus' work as a source of radical thought in early modern Europe*, 2009.

Further Reading

Huizinga, Johan, *Erasmus and the Age of the Reformation*, 1952. (Old but classic.)

Original language reading

Garber, Klaus, ed. *Nation und Literatur im Europa der Fruehen Neuzeit.*, 1989.

Suggested paper topics

Erasmus is the only non German writer—he was Dutch—to be included under German literature in the present Encyclopedia. Not all editors agree on the decision to include him in such a context. What is your feeling? How sharply is the word 'German' definable, when it comes to writers of the 14th and 15th centuries?

How would you characterize the attitude of Erasmus vis a vis the 'Church abuses' Martin Luther decries? Is Erasmus appalled by those abuses, or more 'tolerant'? What is the background for Erasmus' particular orientation?

EXCERPT from Erasmus Colloquies

http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=1494033&pageno=4

AN ADMONITORY NOTE OF ERASMUS ON THE TRICKS AND IMPOSTURES OF A CERTAIN DOMINICAN, WHO HAD PUBLISHED IN FRANCE THE COLLOQUIES OF ERASMUS RIDICULOUSLY INTERPOLATED BY HIMSELF. _A Book of Colloquies had appeared, the material of which was collected partly from domestic talks, partly from my papers; but with a mixture of certain trivialities, not only without sense, but also in bad Latin,--perfect solecisms. This trash was received with wonderful applause; for in these matters too Fortune has her sport. I was compelled therefore to lay hands on these trumperies. At length, having applied somewhat greater care, I added considerable matter, so that the book might be of fair size, and in fact might appear worthy even of the honour of being dedicated to John Erasmus, son of Froben, a boy then six years old, but of extraordinary natural ability. This was done in the year 1522. But the nature of this work is such, that it receives addition as often as it is revised. Accordingly I frequently made an addition for the sake of the studious, and of John Froben; but so tempered the subject-matters, that besides the pleasure of reading, and their use in polishing the style, they might also contain that which would conduce to the formation of character. Even while the book I have referred to contained nothing but mere rubbish, it was read with wonderful favour by all. But when it had gained a richer utility, it could not escape [Greek: tôn sykphantôn dêgmata]. A certain divine of Louvain, frightfully blear of eye, but still more of mind, saw in it four heretical passages. There was also another incident connected with this work worth relating. It was lately printed at Paris with certain passages corrected, that is to say, corrupted, which appeared to attack monks, vows, pilgrimages, indulgences, and other things of that kind which, if held in great esteem among the people, would be a source of more plentiful profit to gentlemen of that order. But he did this so stupidly, so clumsily, that you would swear he had been some street buffoon: although the author of so silly a piece is said to be a certain divine of the Dominican order, by nation a Saxon. Of what avail is it to add his name and surname, which he himself does not desire to have suppressed? A monster like him knows not what shame is; he would rather look for praise from his villany. This rogue added a new Preface in my name, in which he represented three men sweating at the instruction of one boy: Capito, who taught him Hebrew, Beatus Greek, and me, Latin. He represents me as inferior to each of the others alike in learning and in piety; intimating that there is in the Colloquies a sprinkling of certain matters which savour of Luther's dogmas. And here I know that some will chuckle, when they read that Capito is favoured by such a hater of Luther with the designation of an excellent and most accomplished man. These and many things of the like kind he represents me as saying, taking the pattern of his effrontery from a letter of Jerome, who complains that his rivals had circulated a forged letter under his name amongst a synod of bishops in Africa; in which he was made to confess that, deceived by certain Jews, he had falsely translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew. And they would have succeeded in persuading the bishops that the letter was Jerome's, had they been able in any tolerable degree, to imitate Jerome's style.

17th Century German Literature

The historical event of huge importance for Germany, in the seventeenth century, was the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), which was brought on by the Hapsburgs' renewed attempts to stamp out Protestants—thus, by the continuing inter faith conflict opened up Martin Luther, and a century after the Reformation mired in power-turf issues which were decidedly not theological. The Protestants were aided in the war by Denmark, Sweden, and France, and once again they won freedom of worship. Such freedom, however, was dearly bought. Germany was so utterly devastated and so nearly depopulated (about two thirds of the population perished) that it was unable to recover for nearly a century.

The century was for the most part literarily barren, with important exceptions made for the religious/visitory poetries of Jakob Boehme and Angelus Silesius, and the fascinating novel *Simplicissimus* (1669) by Grimmelshausen.

Jakob Boehme

Christian tradition in early German literature. Meister Eckhart, Erasmus, Luther, now Jakob Boehme the true Christian mystic, and not much later Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), who was born in the year Boehme (1515-1624) died: however shaky the engagement of early German literature with Christianity, one can say that by the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance there is complete entanglement between German literature, the topic of this part of our Encyclopedia, and the Christian tradition. The just named authors would be at the top of any reading list of German literature through the seventeenth century.

Jacob Boehme the individual. Jacob Boehme was born near Goerlitz, in present day Poland, in what was then the Holy Roman Empire. His father was a well to do Lutheran peasant, but the boy's circumstances dictated a modest career, and he was first assigned to cattle herding, until it was found that his health would not permit such exertions. He then took up shoemaking, was assigned to live with a supportive family, but they were not Christian and Boehme left them, in need of spiritual nourishment. In 1599 he got this nourishment, married, and went on to have four children. But he was no candidate for a settled bourgeois life. In 1600 he had the first of many visions. Though he would live and write profusely around those visions he would continue, for the rest of his life, to reside and work in the communities where he was born.

Boehme's visions and thought. The first of Boehme's visions occurred in 1600, when he was watching a beam of sunlight on a pewter dish, and in that perception had a vision of the structure of the universe, and of its inherent order. (He will come to write, at length, about evil as essentially disorder, as nothing but absence of order.) Despite warnings that he should desist from the direction of his thoughts—for Boehme began rapidly to write down and disseminate his visions—Boehme persisted from 1602 on with the text, *Aurora*, which was going to be his first shocking appearance on the religious stage of his time. There was much uproar against what appeared to some to be the pantheism of this early thought, and the uproar grew. Among the notions assuming thematic form in Boehme's extensive writings—particularly in the *Mysterium magnum* and *De signatura Rerum*-- are many which, in the sensitive new religious climate of Reformation, when new movements and affiliations were shaping in the wake of Luther, were extremely unnerving to orthodoxy. Boehme's notion that the Fall (and the Devil) are necessary parts of the Creation touched the Christian sensibility forcefully. Is God then partly evil? Was Christ's sacrifice necessary and 'good'? The counterpart idea that man can become 'as god' by divesting himself of humanity and seeing the world as God sees it, is equally disturbing, and confusing to the orthodox. We are reminded of the daring conflation, in Meister Eckhart, of the perceptions of human and the existence of God. In all of these realms of thought, whether seeing the creation as a vast birth giving field of suffering, or seeing mankind as evil struggling toward the light, and doing so with the power of free will, given by God, Boehme's often 'daring' thought put him at odds with the newly established Lutheran church, and yet his thinking remains inscribed inside the theology of Luther.

Is Meister Eckhart a literary creator? Is this work German literature? As we track the development of German literature, from *The Niebelungenlied* to the Reformation, we see that the German cultural imagination staged its first efforts in terms of what we would call religion imagination. Whether we

consider this imagination purely fictive, or part of another reality discourse, will depend on the viewpoint toward religion which we bring to reading visionaries like Boehme.

Reading

Primary source reading

An Introduction to Jacob Boehme: Four Centuries of Thought and Reception, ed. Hessayon and Apetrei, 2013.

Secondary source reading

Goodrick-Clarke, N., *Jacob Boehme and Theosophy*, 2008.

Further reading

Weeks, Andrew, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the 17th century Philosopher and Mystic*, 1991.

Original language reading

Kemper, Hans-Georg, *Deutsche Lyrik der fruehen Neuzeit*, 3 vols., 1986-7.

Suggested paper topics

Does Boehme seem to you to break from the spirit of Luther's movement, or to exceed Luther in giving the individual free and direct access to the experience of god? Had the churches, both Catholic and Lutheran, reason to fear the thought of a 'maverick' genius like Boehme? What has been the history of church response to mysticism?

What relation do you see between the mystical imagination and that of the great (but not mystical) writer, like Shakespeare? When Boehme sees the order of the universe in a bowl of water is he having a 'poetic vision'? Consult, in answering, the work of William Blake, who was one of the 'writers' most profoundly indebted to Boehme.

Excerpt The Way to Christ <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/boehme/waytochrist.ii.ii.html>

Showing how Man should consider himself.

CHRIST said, Except ye turn and become as Children, ye shall not see the kingdom of God. Again, he said to Nicodemus; Except a Man be born again, of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God; for that which is born of the Flesh is Flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

2. Also the Scripture positively declareth, that the fleshly natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness unto him, neither can he know or conceive them.

3. Now seeing that all of us have Flesh and Blood and are mortal, as we find by Experience, and yet the Scripture saith, that We are the Temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us, and that the Kingdom of God is within us, and that Christ must be formed in us; also, that He will give us his Flesh for Food, and his Blood for Drink: And that, Whosoever shall not eat of the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood hath no Life in him. Therefore we should seriously consider, what kind of Man in us it is, that is capable of being thus like the Deity.

4. For it cannot be said of the mortal Flesh that turneth to Earth again, and liveth in the Vanity of this World, and continually lusteth against God; that it is the Temple of the Holy Ghost; much less can it be said that the New Birth cometh to pass in this earthly Flesh, which dieth and putrifieth, and is a continual House of Sin.

5. Yet seeing that it remaineth certain, that a True Christian is born of Christ, and that the New Birth is the Temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us, and that the New Man only, that is born of Christ, partaketh of the Flesh and Blood of Christ; it appeareth that it is not so easy a Matter to be a Christian.

6. And that Christianity doth not consist in the mere knowing of the History, and applying the Knowledge thereof to ourselves, saying that Christ died for us, and hath destroyed Death and turned it into Life in us, and that He hath paid the Ransom for us, so that we need do nothing but comfort ourselves therewith, and steadfastly believe that it is so.

7. For we find of ourselves that Sin is living, lusting, strong, and powerfully working in the Flesh, and therefore it must be somewhat else, which doth not co-operate with Sin in the Flesh, nor willeth it, that is the New-Birth in Christ.

8. For St. Paul saith, There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. And further, Should we that are Christians be yet Sinners? God forbid, seeing we are dead to Sin in Christ.

9. Besides, the Man of Sin cannot be the Temple of the Holy Ghost; and yet, there is no Man that sinneth not, for God hath shut up all under Sin. As the Scripture saith, No one living is righteous in thy Sight, if thou imputest his Sins to him. The righteous Man falleth seven Times a Day; and yet it cannot be meant that the righteous falleth and sinneth, but his mortal and sinful Man. For the righteousness of a Christian in Christ cannot Sin.

18th century German Literature

The 18th century, especially the second half of it, is arguably the richest period in German cultural life, and the period of its influence over world wide culture, to this date. Although the country was still a hodgepodge of more or less independent states bounds together in a loose confederation, Prussia began to emerge as the dominant power, and glimmerings of a national consciousness began to appear. In the Seven Years War (1756-1763) the brilliant leadership of Frederick II (the Great, ruled 1740-1786) enabled Prussia, assisted by troops from Hanover and subsidies from England, to withstand the armies of France, Austria, and Russia.

In Germany, as in most of the other European countries, rationalism and deism were beginning to attract many adherents. These systems of belief were opposed first by pietism (a revival of simple piety, plus religious emotionalism) and later by Rousseauism. The theories of Diderot and Rousseau about democracy, the rights of man, and individual liberty led to no political upheaval in Germany—but in the social and intellectual realms Rousseauism imposed on rationalism helped to foster the indigenous movement known as Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress) 'which had as its objectives a reform of political and social life and a regeneration of literature.' After mid century there was a burst of great writing—one thinks of this as the Classical Age of German literature—Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Herder, and from there, passing into the following century, the rich contributions of Germany to the Romantic movement, and to its philosophic drivers, Kant and a lineage of greats

Lessing

Gottfried von Lessing. Gottfried von Lessing (1729-1781) was the exemplary Enlightenment figure of the German 18th century: a dramatist, public art critic, an art theorist, and a public figure in the new urban art world. As we step into his world, we leave the world of Grimmelshausen (d. 1676) and Silesius (d. 1677), for example, far behind—where 'behind' means fifty years closer to the intense world of very early modern Europe, to which still clings much of the late Mediaeval—even the worlds of the Meistersingers or Meister Eckhart. Those two or three generations of difference were of great importance for the cultural environments of all western European societies, and perhaps of greatest importance for Germany, which—as the documentation in this Encyclopedia suggests—barely had a Renaissance, through which the mediaeval could be mediated, and might be said to have substituted a Reformation for a Renaissance. How does this play out in Lessing's life?

Lessing's career and thought. Gottfried was born in a small village in Saxony. His father was a clergyman at the local Latin School, and Lessing himself was well educated in classical languages, before going on to study theology and medicine at the University of Leipzig. (Noteworthy that among the intelligentsia, of early modern Europe, advanced study of medicine and theology were often coupled; twin skills in understanding personhood, corporeal and spiritual.) Between 1748-1760 Lessing was employed by various opinion journals and art critical papers, which played important roles in the, growing cultural life of major cities like Hamburg. He wrote reviews of plays, art exhibits, and social events, starting to gather the texts which would be part of his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. While carrying out that urban critic work—a byproduct of the new cultural sophistication of the city, in which bourgeois middle class values, and a new level of expendable income, were changing the landscape—Lessing had been working as a dramaturgical adviser to the Hamburg National Theater. It was during this time that he was also writing, producing, and directing his own path breaking dramas, comedies (like *Minna von Barnhelm*) that opened out the inner ironies of domestic life), bourgeois tragedies (like *Emilia Galotti*), or idea plays—a fresh phenomenon on the German stage (like *Nathan the Wise*, which is one of Lessing's many eloquent appeals for respect among members of different religions.)

Lessing's critical mind. It was in the course of this active professional and dramaturgical life that Lessing wrote a number of his most remarkable critical works, like *Laokoon* (1766), in which he analyzes a famous piece of sculpture, based on a scene from Virgil's Aeneid, in order to discriminate between the skills (narrative and depictive, respectively) proper to poetry and sculpture. From such a text we see what an immensely sharp aesthetic perception Lessing brought to his work. This prominence of the aesthetic, in his thinking, is one more indicator of the new cultural world we move into with the German Enlightenment. We have seen powerful artistic skills, like those of the earliest German poetry, epic and love song, but we have not seen critical thinking about the arts.

Lessing and the Enlightenment. Lessing was a major voice for toleration and human understanding, one might say a Christian humanism with some resemblance to a much earlier thinker like Erasmus. But there is a difference, and it points to the Enlightenment. Lessing is a friend to humanity and its dignity, and for him the Christian input (which he takes for granted as essential) is a broad civilizing spirit rather than a powerful set of arguments.

Reading

Primary source reading

Lessing, Gottfried, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. McCormick, 1984.

Secondary source reading

Harpham, Geoffrey Galt, 'So...What is Enlightenment?, An inquisition into modernity,' *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Spring, 1994), 524-556.

Further reading

Luckhurst, Mary, *Dramaturgy: A revolution in Theater*, 2006.

Original language reading

Bahr, E., ed., *Was ist Aufklaerung? Thesen und Definitiionen*, 1974.

Suggested paper topics

The Enlightenment of course opens attention onto the role of women in literature and the arts, as well as in society. What kind of understanding of women does Lessing show in dramas like *Emilia Galotti* or *Minna von Barnhelm*? Compare his view of women with that of earlier German writers we have met. Or, if

you can, with Goethe's treatment of Gretchen in Faust. From the strictly aesthetic standpoint, does Lessing put women to good artistic use?

Please reevaluate the argument of *Laocoon* for our own time. What are the issues of lasting interest here? Are we still interested in the difference between the narrative work of language arts like poetry, and the 'static' pictorial quality of works like sculpture? Do those issues go to the heart of the nature of the arts?

EXCERPT Laocoon Introduction

www.archive.org/.../laocoongott00lessuoft/laocoongott00lessuoft_djvu.t..http://www.archive.org/stream/aocoongott00lessuoft/laocoongott00lessuoft_djvutxt The first person who compared Painting and Poetry with each other was a man of fine feeling, who perceived that both these arts produced upon him a similar effect. Both, he felt, placed before us things absent as present, appearance as reality. Both deceived, and the deceit of both was pleasing. A second person sought to penetrate into the inner nature of this pleasure, and discovered that in both it flowed from one and the same source. The beautiful, the notion of which we first derive from corporeal objects, has general rules applicable to various things; to actions, to thoughts, as well as to forms. A third person, who reflected upon the value and upon the distribution of these general rules, remarked that some of them had prevailed more in Painting and others more in Poetry, and that with respect to the latter rules, Poetry could be aided by the illustrations and examples supplied by Painting; with respect to the former rules, Painting could be aided by the illustrations and examples supplied by Poetry. The first was an amateur; the second was a philosopher; the third was a critic. It was not easy for the two first to make a wrong use either of their feeling or of their reasoning. On the other hand, the principal force of the remarks of the critic depends upon the correctness of their application to the particular case, and it would be astonishing, inasmuch as for one really acute, you will find fifty merely witty critics, if this application had always been made with all the caution requisite to hold the scales equal between the two Arts. Apelles and Protogenes, in their lost writings upon Painting confirmed and illustrated the rules relating to it by the rules of Poetry, which had been already established; so that we may be assured that in them the same moderation and accuracy prevailed, which at the present day we see in the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Horace, and Quintilian, when they apply the principles and experience of Painting to Eloquence and to Poetry. It is the privilege of the Ancients in no one thing to do too much or too little. But we moderns have often believed that in many of our works we have surpassed them, because we have changed their little byways of pleasure into highways, even at the risk of being led by these shorter and safer highways into paths which end in a wilderness.

19th century German Literature

The conquests of Napoleon Bonaparte dealt a severe blow to the hopes of the German patriots and those who were beginning to make Germany aware of herself as a nation. French domination lasted from 1803-1813. As usually is the case, military attacks did not extinguish nationalist zeal, but fanned the flames higher; and uniting against the common enemy helped to bring the loosely confederated states closer together. Some of the dramas and lyrics of the great poets—especially *Minna von Barnhelm* by Lessing, Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, and Goethe's *Faust (Part I)*; published 1808—gave the German speaking states an illustrious common heritage and emphasized the idea of a common fatherland.

The German armies that helped defeat Napoleon in 1813 had been promised various reforms, including more political liberty and a constitutional government. Their expectations were disappointed. A policy of reaction, inaugurated by Metternich in Austria, was adopted by most of the states; and participation in the government and freedom of the press and of speech were denied to the people. The period of reaction and absolutism continued for several decades, but popular discontent grew so strong that it became open rebellion in 1848. Then some steps toward constitutional government were taken, and some of the absolutist policies were abolished. In 1871 the German people were given quite modern social legislation, under Chancellor Otto Bismarck.

In the meantime, tremendous progress toward national unity was made. In 1815 Austria allied itself with some of the other states in the German confederation; in 1834 the formation of the Zollverein began real unification; and in 1866 the North German Confederation was formed. Finally Germany defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War (1870), and William I was declared Emperor of the German Empire in 1871.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte

The Life of Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1772-1829) was born in upper Lusatia as the son of a ribbon weaver. He was from a peasant family long settled in the district, and for the first years of his life he was educated by his father. However the young man showed exceptional tenacity, and was noticed: a baron, from the neighborhood, was struck by the youngster's extraordinary preaching ability, and offered to pay for his school tuition. The young man was put under the charge of one Pastor Knebel in Meissen, who saw to it that Johann was sent to the local gymnasium and given the most thorough possible classical education.

Fichte's education. In 1774 Johann matriculated at the distinguished Schulpforta school—at which both of the Schlegel brothers and Nietzsche would be students. In 1780 he enrolled as a Theology student at the University of Jena, which was by this time the central educational nucleus of Germany, if not Europe. All did not go smoothly, however, as Fichte had serious problems with tuition, and had to drop his University studies in order to serve as a tutor. An intense but unhappy love affair only made matters more difficult. As with so many of the brilliant and highly educated German thinkers of this time, Fichte's best hope for satisfying employment was on the university level. In December of 1793 he was made Professor of Philosophy at Jena, from which position, unfortunately, he was to be dismissed on a charge of atheism. (We might today deeply question that decision, as what in fact Fichte believed, and pronounced, was that God can be known through the will and goodness, not through a personal love—which set him at serious odds with the many Pietist forces that were dominant in the administration of the University.) In 1808 Fichte found himself distressed and discouraged by the devastation wrought by Napoleon's armies in Prussia, and delivered was to become his most widely attended to work, his *Reden an der deutschen Nation, Speeches to the German Nation*, on the urgent need for Germans to come together as a national whole, and—rather as Herder had sought—to discover their rich and nourishing cultural past with its unity in a single great language.

Fichte's work. Fichte was particularly known for his speeches to the German nation, but it was less well understood from where he was coming, in his national summons expressed in those *Reden*. The determining challenge to Fichte, in the development of his own thought, was the growing development of his thought-master and teacher, Immanuel Kant—whose *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) established a critical benchmark for the speculative thought of his own time, turn of century Germany, and for world

thought on the philosophical level. In interacting with Kant's idealism—in prioritizing the dynamic of the ego, as the creator of a self-sufficient world; in arguing that consciousness is not grounded in anything; that there is no noumenal realm over against the phenomenal; in exploring domains of self awareness and self consciousness; in developing rich concepts of intersubjectivity—Fichte devoted some of his own philosophical attention to the question of the conditions and limits of thought. (It is increasingly apparent that Fichte, in his immanentist idealism, helped bridge the transition to Hegel's idealistic system of the absolute unfolding of Geist.) It is noteworthy that in Fichte's case, as in those of other German philosophers and religious thinkers, the presence of literature and philosophy within one another is inextricably close.

Reading

Primary source reading

Beck, Gunnar, *Fichte and Kant on Freedom, Rights, and Law*, 2008.

Secondary source reading

Martin, Wayne, *Idealism and Objectivity: Understanding Fichte's Jena Project*, 1997.

Further reading

Zoller, Gunther, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: the Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will*, 1998.

Original language reading

Rohs, Peter, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte*, 1991.

Suggested paper topics

In his *Speeches to the German Nation* Fichte issued an impassioned plea for national self-consciousness and unity. Read those speeches, noting what sentiments they target in Fichte's fellow Germans. Assess the effect of those speeches, and when, if ever, the issue of German nationality found a solution.

In his philosophy Fichte—following the inspiration and challenge of Kant—is centrally concerned with the nature of the self and the other it relates to. This is a central problem for philosophy, and assumes special importance for the Romantics, because they are intent on the rich self affirmations of the self-liberating individual. Can you construe this self-other issue as a central concern for the understanding of literature? Does this issue bring out a point where the concerns of literature and philosophy are identical?

Excerpt: http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Johann_Gottlieb_Fichte

- The correct relationship between the higher and lower classes, the appropriate mutual interaction between the two is, as such, the true underlying support on which the improvement of the human species rests. The higher classes constitute the mind of the single large whole of humanity; the lower classes constitute its limbs; the former are the thinking and designing [Entwerfende] part, the latter the executive part.

- The new education must consist essentially in this, that it completely destroys freedom of will in the soil which it undertakes to cultivate, and produces on the contrary strict necessity in the decisions of the will, the opposite being impossible. Such a will can henceforth be relied on with confidence and certainty.

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- If you want to influence him at all, you must do more than merely talk to him ; you must fashion him, and fashion him in such a way that he simply cannot will otherwise than you wish him to will.

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- Upon the progress of knowledge the whole progress of the human race is immediately dependent: he who retards that, hinders this also. And he who hinders this, —what character does he assume towards his age and posterity? Louder than with a thousand voices, by his actions he proclaims into the deafened ear of the world present and to come —"As long as I live at least, the men around me shall not become wiser or better; — for in their progress I too, notwithstanding all my efforts to the contrary, should be dragged forward in some direction; and this I detest I will not become more enlightened, — I will not become nobler. Darkness and perversion are my elements, and I will summon all my powers together that I may not be dislodged from them."

Schleiermacher

The development of Schleiermacher. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was a German philosopher, theologian, Biblical scholar, and perhaps above all textual hermeneute, who was also a major player among German literary philosophical luminaries, like the Schlegels and Novalis, who gathered around the University of Jena at the turn of the century, and who did so with a particular focus on the journal *Athenaeum* (1798-1800), which was its movement's beacon publication. That is, Schleiermacher was deeply involved with this group of literary and artistic people who were trying to track a new path for German thought on the far side of Weimar classicism—the rich inheritance of Goethe and Schiller, who were living near Jena, in Weimar. Schleiermacher, in other words, not only wrote on culture and philosophy for *Athenaeum*, but belonged deeply to the movement of change and reconstruction that was taking over German culture as it entered its 'Romantic' phase. Who was this complex theologian and cultural critic with such a binding to the art world, and with a destiny to build toward a new religious sensibility to meet the demands of a Protestant culture still debating the issues that concerned Luther.

Life of Friedrich Schleiermacher. Friedrich Schleiermacher was born in Breslau, in Southern Silesia. He was the son of a chaplain in the Prussian Army. He was initially sent to a religious strict Moravian school, but he soon realized that his belief in Christianity was not of that sort, was under question. (Letters to his father, from these years, show the son tiptoeing around the belief issue, which was most important to his father, then blurting out in a letter that he no longer believed in the Trinity.) After this flap was resolved, it was agreed that Schleiermacher should go to the University of Halle, which was 'rationalist' and on the whole congenial to Schleiermacher, who profited from this time to study Greek and fall in love with Plato and Aristotle.

Schleiermacher's Writing. After University, Schleiermacher, who was actively writing all this time, took the usual posts as a tutor, and involved himself in what was to be a seven year relationship with the wife of a Berlin clergyman. He also deepened his relationship with Friedrich Schlegel, and brought to fruition the two works that represented the thinking of his first thirty years: his *Reden ueber die Religion* (*Speeches on Religion*) and his *Monologen* (*Monologues*). To these works he added, in 1803, his *Outlines of a History of Morality*, all of which led to his being offered a Chair of Theology at Berlin in 1810.

Schleiermacher's thought. Like that of Fichte, another bigger than life figure in the transition of Germany from Enlightenment and classicism, into the complex early 19th century cultural mode we call Romanticism, Schleiermacher's thought was that of a significant and complex philosopher, as well as a Theologian concerned with bringing harmony between traditional Christianity—his reference point was Lutheranism and Pietism—and the various new naturalisms of the 19th century; not to mention the dramatic developments in textual criticism, hermeneutics, which Schleiermacher was considerably responsible for promoting. In those realms he evoked wide attention for the care with which he read Biblical texts in terms of a well planned method for scrutinizing the intentions of the writer. Schleiermacher's skeptical credence became an important ingredient of the Higher Criticism of the Bible, which was to prove one of the epoch making trends of the 19th century.

Theology. Like Fichte, Schleiermacher wished to base his modernist theology, with its room for evergrowing perspectives, on a compelling account of the human psyche. He elaborated a detailed psychology of self and other, in which God was introduced as the factor of supreme otherness; an otherness which nonetheless we can access in the depths of our self-awareness, where we live as the knowledge of our dependence.

Reading

Primary source reading

Lamm, Julia, *The Living God. Schleiermacher's theological Appropriation of Spinoza*, 1996.

Secondary source reading

Gerrish, Brian, *Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology*, 1984.

Further Reading

Barth, Karl, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, 1982.

Original language reading

Nowak, Kurt, *Schleiermacher: Leben, Werk, und Wirkung*, 2001.

Suggested paper topics

Schleiermacher was a renowned Biblical scholar and text critic, who evolved many techniques for the analysis of Biblical texts. In one sense he was a major thrust of the so called higher criticism of the Bible, which led to fresh and unsuperstitious readings of scripture; while in another sense he reawoke interest in the Bible as sacred literature.

Examine some of the detailed features of Schleiermacher's method of Biblical criticism.

Examine Schleiermacher's contributions to the Athenaeum journal. How did Schleiermacher address the intellectual problems of the day, that Sattelzeit (saddle-time) between the end of Weimar classicism and the full blown unfolding of the Romantic movement?

Excerpt <http://www.egs.edu/library/friedrich-schleiermacher/quotes/>

To be a religious man and to pray are really one and the same thing. To join in the thought of God with every thought of any importance that occurs to us ; in all our admiration of external nature, to regard it as the work of His wisdom ; to take counsel with God about all our plans, that we may be able to carry them out in His name ; and even in our most mirthful hours to remember His all-seeing eye ; this is the prayer without ceasing to which we are called, and which is really the essence of true religion.

Therefore let us learn to die in seeing Christ die ! It is no small thing that I expect from you in calling on you to do this ; for it is with the death of the Saviour as it was with His life ; let him who seeks only happiness and joy shun likeness to Him ; let him alone seek it who covets what is great and perfect at any price.

If, then, His Spirit is actually among us, if Christ becomes increasingly glorious to us through our study of His words, our inward parts more and more enlightened by the eternal, divine light, which He brought from heaven, our hearts more and more purified ; we shall then, when the next time of commemorating our Lord comes round, return with new joy and gratitude to the beautiful circle of our Christian festivals, and anew, with yet purer spirit and in a way more worthy of Him, participate in adoring remembrance of His birth, His sufferings and His glorification.

However much admiration and honour was given to our Saviour by many of His contemporaries during His life on earth ; however powerfully a yet greater number were struck, at least for the moment, by His exalted character ; still just His greatest words and His noblest deeds often remained dark even to the noblest and best around Him, and seemed to the rest a piece of insolent pretension.

We will begin this series of meditations with the relationship which is the foundation of all others, namely, the holy bond of marriage, which we must regard as the first appointment of God after His almighty Word had called man into existence. Out of this sacred union are developed all other human relations ; on it rests the Christian family, and of such Christian families Christian communities consist. Moreover, on this union depends the propagation of the human race, and the transmitting of the power of the divine Word from one generation to another. Therefore let us today consider this foundation of the whole Christian Church in the light of God's Word.

But our grateful joy before God must also be free from slothfulness. It seems really superfluous to say this ; for slothfulness and joy can never harmonize. Joy arouses the spirit, so that it is nothing but strength and life and activity ; and this is pre-eminently true of joy before God, for it is ever exciting, ever bringing into action whatever may be specially in our hearts at the same time.

Hegel

Hegel's Life. Georg Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was born in Stuttgart, in the kingdom of Wuerttemberg, where his father was secretary to the local revenue office. At three he attended the local public school, and proved astonishingly precocious. Two years later when he entered the local Latin School he already knew the first declension, with some help from his mother. By the time he had enrolled in the Stuttgart Gymnasium Illustre he was a voracious reader—not only of Classics but of German authors like Klopstock and Lessing. At the age of eighteen he entered the renowned Tuebinger Stift, the theological faculty at Tuebingen University, where he was lucky to form friendships with fellow students like the poet Friedrich Hoelderlin, and the critic and philosopher Friedrich Schelling, both of whom had significant influence on the development of Hegel. (One of the closest bonds among the three was their shared enthusiasm for the French Revolution, which was in full swing, and which was stirring the spirit of freedom in Germany; and which would in the proximate future foreordain the issue of freedom to central position in the thought of the three friends.) After graduation—he was writing drafts of philosophical essays all the time—Hegel spent several years as a private tutor. In 1801 he went to Jena, where he collaborated with Schelling, while by 1806 we see him completing one of his great books, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Die Phaenomenologie des Geistes*), in which he unfolds the best known principles of the philosophy we now, thanks to him, call absolute idealism. (While completing this work he had occasion to see Napoleon, on horseback, entering Prussia victoriously, and had to admire this victorious figure of history, who would seem to embody key elements of Hegel's historical belief that what happens is right.) In 1818 Hegel was appointed to a Professorship of Philosophy in Berlin, and saw his intellectual reputation spread throughout Europe.

Hegel's and German thought. Theologians and philosophers—from Eckhart to Boehme, Fichte to Schopenhauer—have played fruitful roles in shaping the creative imaginations of German literature. (In fact no other literature than German so turns around the unity of the philosophical with the imaginative.) Throughout his work, in logic, aesthetics, and especially in metaphysics Hegel unfolds a thought scheme in which the Absolute Spirit, Geist, realizes itself, in revolutionary development, into the many stages first of cosmic unfolding then of historical unfolding, from the earliest human presences known to our planet to Hegel's own present, in which he saw—remember his response to the French Revolution—the furthest yet development of the will of what is.

Hegel: Aesthetics and Logic. As the Absolute Spirit reveals itself it inevitably assumes an evolving sequence of phenomenal expressions. (While pure spirit, that is, it can only realize itself by taking on concrete forms.) Pure thought (philosophy), forms of society or government, conceptions that become the laws, norms of behavior (moral values): all these realms of expression enable us to know Geist in its unfolding. Quite as meaningful to us, in our effort to see the advance of Spirit behind us, is the unfolding of Idea as sensuous form, that is as art. We are to assume, if we follow Hegel's argument of the 'advance of spirit,' that its expression in concrete form, in the arts, will show itself to be unceasingly 'purer,' and 'more Geist like.' It is a matter of fine distinction, to consider Hegel's efforts to establish this point, and a pleasure to the aesthetic in all of us, to see to what extraordinary insights Hegel takes us, as he conducts us into the development of literature, the plastic arts, and architecture up to his own time. It is only for the

sake of minimal completeness, that we must add, that Hegel's dialectical system of logic, by which he characterizes the self-generation of Spirit, is an indispensable correlate of the evolutionary process he tracks in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Reading

Primary source reading

A Hegel Reader, ed. Houlgate, 1998.

Secondary source reading

Houlgate, Stephen, *An Introduction to Hegel. Freedom, Truth, and History*, 2005.

Further reading

Solomon, Robert, *In the Spirit of Hegel*, 1983.

Original language reading

Schaefer, Reiner, *Die dialektik und ihre besonderen Formen in Hegel's Logik*, 2001.

Suggested paper topics

Hegel believes that the arts are expressions of Geist, spirit; incarnations. (This is a one sentence survey of a lifetime of positioning the argument.) Does this general kind of approach, to what the arts and especially literature, are, seem promising to you? Is it an approach which leads to fresh insights into texts of literature?

When Hegel saw the victorious Napoleon riding through Prussia, he was amazed, and despite his feelings about the matter he admired the conqueror. What was it he admired? Was it the spirit of history incarnate, as we are told? If so, what does that incarnation of spirit in history mean to Hegel, and why is it so powerful? Have you had that feeling, in watching an international figure who seems to be riding the wave of history?

Excerpt https://www.goodreads.com/.../quotes/6188.Georg_Wilhelm_Friedrich

Governments have never learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it When liberty is mentioned, we must always be careful to observe whether it is not really the assertion of private interests which is thereby designated.

Mark this well, you proud men of action! you are, after all, nothing but unconscious instruments of the men of thought.

Education is the art of making man ethical.

We do not need to be shoemakers to know if our shoes fit, and just as little have we any need to be professionals to acquire knowledge of matters of universal interest.

An idea is always a generalization, and generalization is a property of thinking. To generalize means to think

Truth in philosophy means that concept and external reality correspond.

The history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom.

Friedrich Schlegel

Profile of Friedrich Schlegel. Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) was a German poet, literary critic, and philosopher who was one of the principal creators of the concept of the Romantic, and inspirational in developing the new aesthetics of the Romantic Movement, especially as it was being formulated in the cultural seedbed of Jena. (Among the writers most directly influenced by him were Coleridge and Adam Mickiewicz.) He made his debut as a critic and essayist, but devoted the most concentrated part of his work life to his specialty, Indo European linguistics and comparative literature. He should be distinguished from his equally distinguished brother, August Wilhelm Schlegel, with whom Friedrich collaborated on the Athenaeum journal in Jena, and who also contributed to the initial impulses of Romanticism.

The Life of Friedrich Schlegel. Friedrich Schlegel was born in Hanover, son of the Lutheran pastor of the Hanover Marktkirche. Still a young man he went for the study of law at the universities of both Goettingen and Leipzig, but soon tired of that study, and turned toward an exclusive concern with literary matters, especially in the context of the Athenaeum journal, on which he worked at the turn of the century with Tieck, Fichte, and Novalis. In his work for that journal, especially in the Athenaeumsfragmente and in his novel Lucinde, *he worked through the basic principle of the idea of Romanticism*, in forms which—say in his definition of the Romantic, or of the fragment or the ironic—would be major legacies for early 19th century thinkers, across Europe, as they attempted to characterize the new cultural/literary world they found themselves in. The years subsequent to The Athenaeum work, the last twenty years of his life, were devoted to a vast array of literary studies, the most fruitful of which were in Indo European culture and linguistics.

The works. As a youth Schlegel was thought a wild card revolutionary and atheist, but in 1818, when he converted to Roman Catholicism, he moved into a late phase, as a representative of the arch conservative Metternich, in which his political and social views were unrecognizably different from those of his youth, and in which, for example, he found no more disgusting example of political structure than Anglo-American parliamentarianism, with its openness to the voice of the people. What transpired between these two intellectual postures of Friedrich Schlegel? Perhaps the key lies in the notion of the Romantic, which as Schlegel first forged it served as a conceptual bridge toward fresh new perceptions of what a literary text (especially Poetry) is, while later in his thinking life Schlegel found that this Romantic notion, which for him fundamentally connoted moods and tones of the Middle Ages (the Romantic embedded in the roots of the inheritance from Rome), became the enveloping mantle for an archaizing thinker whose fascinations were all in the past.

Schlegel as Scholar. With Friedrich Schlegel we truly find the blend of serious and seminal scholar with lyric poet with literary critical intelligence capable of intuiting the richest formulations of the entire birthing Romantic movement. The masterpiece of his rich scholarly poetic achievement is *On the Language and Wisdom of India* (1818). In that work he draws on his own intensive study of Indo European linguistics, which began in 1803, and his acceptance of the position, then coming into first prominence, that there were remarkable similarities among Sanskrit, Latin, Greek and Persian. From this observation, which was claiming scholarly attention, Schlegel developed his own version of an Aryanist theory, that the 'noble people,' the Aryans, made their ways west from India, where they deposited their distinctive and exceptionally valuable culture.

Reading

Primary source reading

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Secondary source reading

Beiser, F., *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism 1781-1801*, 2002.

Further reading

Chaouli, M. *The Laboratory of Poetry; Chemistry and Poetics in the work of Friedrich Schlegel*, 2002.

Original language reading

Zovko, Jure, *Verstehen und Nichtverstehen bei Friedrich Schlegel. Zur Entstehung und Bedeutung seiner hermeneutischen Kritik*, 1990.

Suggested paper topics

What is the relation of Friedrich Schlegel the scholar to Schlegel the ideologist of the Romantic poetic? Does the Schlegel for whom Aryan poetics are defining for western culture, support his notions of irony, the fragmentary, and visionary on his discoveries as a scholar?

What are the principal ways that Friedrich Schlegel begins to distance himself—say in the *Athenaumsfragmente*—from the thinking of the Weimar classicists like Goethe and Schiller? What role does the notion of the fragment play in that distancing? How about the notion of irony? Why are these such influential wedge concepts into the new Romantic world?

Excerpt http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Karl_Wilhelm_Friedrich_Schlegel

The romantic poetry is a progressive universal poetry.

Irony is a form of paradox. Paradox is what is good and great at the same time.

Wit is the appearance, the external flash of imagination. Thus its divinity, and the witty character of mysticism.

Honour is the mysticism of legality.

It is equally fatal for the spirit to have a system and to have none. One must thus decide to join the two.

It is equally fatal for the spirit to have a system and to have none. It will simply have to decide to combine the two.

Nietzsche

Significance of the life of Friedrich Nietzsche. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a German philosopher, classical philologist, poet, and social critic who exercised great influence on such philosophical movements as Existentialism and Postmodernism, and more widely on educated readers worldwide who have attempted to make sense of such developments as the God is Dead movement or the paths to self-orientation in a world of radical individualism. As with many of the greatest German writers—Eckhart, Boehme, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Fichte—in Nietzsche too the borderline between rigorous philosophy and imaginative, even mythical thinking is porous, and constantly transgressed.

The Life of Friedrich Nietzsche. Friedrich Nietzsche was born in Ruckelshausen bei Letzen in Prussia. His father was a Lutheran pastor, and the young Nietzsche was at first sent to the local boys' school. Then from 1858-64 he matriculated at the renowned Schulpforta gymnasium, where he got a conventional thorough grounding in chiefly classical languages—doing poorly only in Hebrew, and creating a minor scandal from time to time with his comrades and the bottle. At Schulpforta Nietzsche wrote poems, composed some interesting music, and discovered a favorite poet, Hoelderlin; in addition, and of eminent importance, he wrote one of his first serious essays, on his loss of Christian faith. (In a sharp letter to his sister, his other self in thinking through value issues, Nietzsche wrote that one can either have faith and be happy, or inquiry, suffer, and be honest.) From Schulpforta Nietzsche went to the University of Bonn, in 1864, to major in Classical Philology. During these years he slipped into the first stages of serious

health issues, severe dysentery, migraines, what were to become debilitating mental issues, probably including schizophrenia; as well as into a serious accident on horseback, in which the muscles of his chest were badly ripped. He was however able to accept, in 1848, the unprecedented offer of a Chair in Classical Philology at the University of Basel—he was only 24—and was to remain a resident of Switzerland for the rest of his life—although his periods of travel for recuperation were unremitting. After a few years Nietzsche had to retire from this taxing teaching post, and devoted himself increasingly to his writings, and to his own recuperation. The period of intense creativity was about to commence; it would see *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), *Human, All Too Human* (1878), *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1882) and a spate of other passionate, driven, contentious texts written before madness took the requisite reason from his poetry.

The Thought of Friedrich Nietzsche. Scattered through the writings of Nietzsche are many themes that can be considered key works of the intellectual climate of the twentieth century and beyond. The outburst of feeling and vision that accompanied Romanticism had borne fruit in a 19th century for which a return to conservative values was widespread—in monarchies, in repressive or obscurantist policies such as those of Metternich and (in part) Bismarck), The implications of scientific investigation were making themselves unavoidable, and the challenges to orthodox religious were compelling believers to reformulate their positions. Into this turbulent mix Nietzsche arrived with a collection of perspectives which, expressed with poetic ardor and uncompromising rudeness, drove wedges into what positions still remained. Notions like the polarity of the Apollonian and Dionysian in drama—the basis of *The Birth of Tragedy*; like *The Will to Power*, a key exhortation to enslaved modern man—largely a victim of Christianity's servile propaganda—to affirm the life he finds himself in; The Death of God, the shibboleth with which Nietzsche compresses his sense that the world has outgrown its dependence on false father figures; and the notion, pervasive throughout Nietzsche's work, that the truth is undiscoverable, that all cognition is perspectival and dependent: such notions, developed with great power in Nietzsche's brief and often aphoristic works, inevitably exercised the strongest effect both on artists and intellectuals.

Reading

Primary source reading

Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits, trans. Hollingdale, 1986.

Secondary source reading

Gemes, Ken; May, Simon, *Nietzsche on Freedom and Authority*, 2009.

Further reading

Nietzsche: Philosophy and the Arts, ed. Kemal, Salim; Gaskell, Ivan; Conway, Daniel, 1998.

Original language reading

Breitschmid, Markus, *Nietzsche's Denkraum*, 2006.

Suggested paper topics

How does Nietzsche deal with the origins and development of ancient Greek tragedy—which he claimed to understand better after his first meetings with Richard Wagner? How is Nietzsche's perspective onto classical culture different from that of the Weimar classicists like Goethe and Schiller? What would Nietzsche say of Winckelmann's idea, that Greek art reaches to a noble simplicity and dignified gravity?

Once again with Nietzsche we come to the boundaries between literature and philosophy. Do Nietzsche's texts, like *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, seem to lie on the side of imaginative literature? Or are they philosophical texts, with a discursive argument, but powered by imagination?

Excerpt en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Friedrich_Nietzsche

“Without music, life would be a mistake.”

“It is not a lack of love, but a lack of friendship that makes unhappy marriages.”

“That which does not kill us makes us stronger.”

“I'm not upset that you lied to me, I'm upset that from now on I can't believe you.”

“It is hard enough to remember my opinions, without also remembering my reasons for them!”

“And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.”

“There is always some madness in love. But there is also always some reason in madness.”

Herder

Johann Gottfried Herder. Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) was an influential German philosopher, memoirist, social critic, and early stage cultural anthropologist, who contributed deeply to the German Enlightenment, to the movement of *Sturm und Drang* (*Storm and Stress*; the pre-Romantic move toward a freeing of emotions on the stage and in writing: 1760's-1780's), and to Weimar Classicism, which became the prevailing literary development of the German late eighteenth century, centered around Goethe, and was already merging into Romanticism.

Herder's Life. Herder was born in Mohrungen, Prussia, and was brought up in an impoverished household, his father a preacher. Extremely studious, as well as hard worked, Herder learned and earned his way to the not distant University of Koenigsberg, hoping to study medicine. As it turned out he came under powerful influences: the lectures of Immanuel Kant, who was drafting the early stages of his culture shaking 'idealism,' and Johann Georg Hamann, a friend and adviser, who led Herder to read and admire Shakespeare. Already from these influences traces of the Herderian world view become visible. From Shakespeare Herder would go on to discover the powerful nation-uniting force of a great poet, who above all formed and formulated the language of his culture, while from Kant, we sense, Herder deepened his instinctual sense that sense life—the daily empirical life of 'ordinary men and women'—is closely allied to their conceptual ideologies and spiritual achievements.

Herder's career develops. In 1764 Herder became a pastor and teacher in Riga, from which, after five years of work, he retired to take a sea voyage to Nantes, in France, and on to Paris. (The account of this trip, *Journal of my Journey in the Year 1769*, is one of his typically brilliant accounts of life as he experienced it—a blend of comparative literature and linguistics, anthropology, and folk nationalism.) By 1770 Herder moved on to Strassbourg, where by great luck he met the young Goethe, with whom he exchanged heady innovative ideas that would lead both men into the *Sturm und Drang* movement. By the mid 1770's Herder would join Goethe, who had helped Herder find a job in Weimar, and with others they worked into writings that constitute the Weimar classicism which was not much later to slip over into the Romanticism of the early 19th century.

Herder and German Folk Culture. While Herder was extremely sensitive to the spirit of his time, certain ideas pervade his thinking from beginning to end, and work their way into his numerous writings, of which we might say, today, that they do not peak in any masterwork but contribute consistently, for more than thirty years, to building a national culture for Germany. His early *Fragments on Recent German Literature*, 1766-67, is a creative diatribe against what Herder considers the coldness of French neoclassicism, with its Latinate base; and a plea for a German literature based on German folk and literary traditions. His *On German Ways and Art* (1773) is a eulogy of Shakespeare, who caught the spirit of his own age, and in whose example Germans can read the potential they have in their own cultural traditions for the making of the greatest literature. *Volkslieder, Folksongs* (1778-79) is a collection of 182 folksongs from many different cultures, much of the work translated by Herder, and evidence of the creative power residing with the Volk. Herder's *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-1791) concentrate his many notions of the evolution of mankind toward Humanity, a gradual process through which all nations and peoples, in their different ways, contribute to the making of a worthy human race.

Reading

Primary Source Reading

Herder: *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, ed. G. Moore, 2006.

Secondary Source Reading.

Herder: *Philosophical Writings*, ed. M.N. Forster, 2002.

Further Reading

J.G. Herder on Social and Political Culture ed. F. M. Barnard, first pub. 1969, reprinted 2010.

Original language reading

Kiesel, Helmut; Muench, Paul, *Gesellschaft und literatur im 18. Jahrhundert: Voraussetzungen und Entstehung des literarischen Markts in Deutschland*, 1977.

Suggested paper topics

What seems to you to be the driving center of the many areas of thought in which Herder was prominent? Is he a philosopher, in your opinion, or a nationalist, or a linguist, or an early sociologist? Or is he a thinker who is constantly reforming a new center for himself as he goes along?

Shakespeare plays an important role in Herder's thought. What is that role? Do you see, in Shakespeare's writing, the massive power that Herder is drawn to? Can you see that power in *Hamlet*, which was the first play of Shakespeare Herder read in English—in his schooldays, under the tutelage of his friend, Hamann. Can you see why Herder preferred Shakespeare to French neoclassicism, and referred to the great alexandrine works of 17th century France as 'sewage from the Seine'?

Excerpt http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Johann_Gottfried_Herder

With the greatest possible solicitude avoid authorship. Too early or immoderately employed, it makes the head waste and the heart empty; even were there no other worse consequences. A person, who reads only to print, to all probability reads amiss; and he, who sends away through the pen and the press every thought, the moment it occurs to him, will in a short time have sent all away, and will become a mere journeyman of the printing-office, a compositor.

Calmly take what ill betideth;
Patience wins the crown at length:
Rich repayment him abideth
Who endures in quiet strength.
Brave the tamer of the lion;
Brave whom conquered kingdoms praise;
Bravest he who rules his passions,
Who his own impatience sways.

Every one loves his country, his manners, his language, his wife, his children; not because they are the best in the World, but because they are absolutely his own, and he loves himself and his own labours in them.

I am no longer misled, therefore, by the mechanism of revolutions: it is as necessary to our species, as the waves to the stream, that it becomes not a stagnant pool. The genius of humanity blooms in continually renovated youth.

•

Air, fire, water and the earth evolve out of the spiritual and material staminibus in periodic cycles of time. Diverse connections of water, air, and light precede the emergence of the seed of the simplest plant, for instance moss. Many plants had to come into being, then die away before an animal emerged.

Winckelmann

Winckelmann and Lessing. Like Gottfried Lessing, and many of his German contemporaries, Johann Winckelmann (1717-1768) took his deepest impulses from the Classical World, which was of course at the center of academic education in eighteenth century Europe and England, and served as the conventional pathway to the higher careers in the University and in the Church. In fact, when you consider Lessing's *Laokoon*, you may say that for both Winckelmann and Lessing the plastic arts of the Greeks and Romans formed the text of supreme importance. For Winckelmann the preoccupation with the Greeks, in particular, became the leitmotif of his life.

Winckelmann the man. Who was Johann Winckelmann? He was born in Stendahl, the son of a cobbler, of a mother who was daughter of a weaver; Winckelmann's childhood was hard and simple, but his academic drive to learn was powerful, and prevailed to gain him a solid classical education at two private gymnasia, from where at age 21 he went on to study Theology at the University of Halle. It was obvious, though, that Winckelmann was no theologian; he turned instead to classical languages, but was unsatisfied with the instruction he found, and moved on, in sequence, to try his hand at a school teaching job, to do private tutoring—where as often he fell in love with a handsome young man, whom he was tutoring, and was rejected—and then to work as curator of the private library of Count von Bunau, an opportunity to extend his reading of contemporary Enlightenment as well as ancient Greek thought. From this point on, Winckelmann's trajectory was to be toward the lands of antiquity, especially Rome, that were targets for all German creators of his time. In 1754, in a well planned move, Winckelmann joined the Catholic Church, and with a grant from the Elector of Saxony left for Rome, and a sequence of posts with Papal dignitaries and Roman noble families. With the support of such agents, for work as a resident art historian and critic, and especially as a brilliant forerunner in archeological methods, Winckelmann remained in Rome until 1768, when he returned to the north, was totally depressed by it, and was in Trieste, on his way back to Italy, when he was murdered.

Winckelmann's masterwork. *The History of Art in Antiquity* (1764) was the most influential of Winckelmann's many works on ancient Greek art—especially on the examples of ancient Greek (and fake Greek and Roman) sculpture which were abundant and widely sought out in the Rome of the time. Winckelmann's History was a testimony to the beauty and ideal sensuality of the ancient Greek figure, and artist. In that art Winckelmann found what he called 'a noble simplicity and a quiet greatness,' and from the model of such art he wished to inspire his contemporaries in their quest to honor and depict the beauty of the human form. (Winckelmann stressed the brilliance of the ancient Greek sculptor, in rendering the essence of the depicted figure without any suggestion of the veins, muscles, nerves which lay under the surface, and in place of which the Greek genius like Phidias was able to strike right for the essence of the human, which was like 'the purest water from the center of the well.')

Like Lessing, Winckelmann turned to the ancient world for spiritual direction in the 'modern world.' From the time of these two great pioneers of Enlightenment, German culture was to remain preoccupied with Antiquity, especially with the Greek example. The inspired descriptive writing, with which Winckelmann drives his History, puts him in the first rank of the German literary minds of his time, as it made him the first widely popular German writer throughout European culture.

Reading

Primary source reading

North, J.H., *Winckelmann's 'Philosophy of Art': A prelude to German Classicism*, 2012.

Secondary source reading

Nisbet, ed., *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe*, 2009.

Further reading

Butler, E. M., *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, 1935; reprinted in 2012. (A classic study.)

Original language reading

Stolpe, Heinz, *Aufklaerung, Fortschritt, Humanitaet: Studien und Kritiken*, 1989.

Suggested paper topics

Winckelmann puts much stress on the 'imitation' (Nachahmung) of the greatest works of Greek art, especially sculpture. In fact his greatest work is consciously devoted to that 'imitation.' What does he mean by that? Does he suggest a creative kind of imitation, by which the imitator raises himself to a higher level of humanity? Or is he following another tradition, by which 'art is thought of as the imitation of nature,' the precise representation?

The Enlightenment is a pan European movement with many meanings, all of which have to do with the modernization of European culture—in science, political and social thought, and art. Why do you suppose the influence of the ancient Classics was so coercive at this time? What was the particular driver behind the German form of this return to the Classical? How does the aesthetic humanism, which bursts out in Germany, relate to the formality of the contemporary French classical theater of Corneille and Racine?

EXCERPT On the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture

<http://www.arthistoryspot.com/2009/12/johann-joachim-winckelmann-reflections-on-the-imitation-of-greek-works-in-painting-and-sculpture/>

Good taste, which is becoming more prevalent throughout the world, had its origins under the skies of Greece. Every invention of foreign nations which was brought to Greece was, as it were, only a first seed that assumed new form and character here. We are told that Minerva chose this land, with its mild seasons, above all others for the Greeks in the knowledge that it would be productive of genius.

The taste which the Greeks exhibited in their works of art was unique and has seldom been taken far from its source without loss. Under more distant skies it found tardy recognition and without a doubt was completely unknown in the northern zones during a time when painting and sculpture, of which the Greeks are the greatest teachers, found few admirers. This was a time when the most valuable works of Correggio were used to cover the windows of the royal stables in Stockholm.

One has to admit that the reign of the great Augustus was the happy period during which the arts were introduced into Saxony as a foreign element. Under his successor, the German Titus, they became firmly established in this country, and with their help good taste is now becoming common. An eternal monument to the greatness of this monarch is that he furthered good taste by collecting and publicly displaying the greatest treasures from Italy and the very best paintings that other countries have produced. His eagerness to perpetuate the arts did not diminish until authentic works of Greek masters and indeed those of the highest quality were available for artists to imitate. The purest sources of art have been opened, and fortunate is the person who discovers and partakes of them. This search means going to Athens; and Dresden will from now on be an Athens for artists.

The only way for us to become great or, if this be possible, inimitable, is to imitate the ancients. What someone once said of Homer—that to understand him well means to admire him—is also true for the art works of the ancients, especially the Greeks. ...

20th Century German Literature

The political and military history of Germany during the first half of the 20th century, is so well known that only the briefest outline should suffice. Under Kaiser Wilhelm II Germany began WW I in 1914. Decisively defeated by the Allies in 1918, she lost all her colonies, Alsace-Lorraine, and some frontier territory. The Republic of Germany (Weimar Republic) was proclaimed in 1919. For fourteen years the nation remained in a deplorable condition: her economy was severely damaged; the government was highly unstable and the people were under a cloud of war guilt. Already as early as 1923 Adolf Hitler made a bid for power in the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich; although this attempt proved abortive, Hitler continued to gain power, and by 1933 he was able to seize complete control of the country. He abolished the Weimar Republic, set up the so called Third Reich, with himself as dictator, repudiated the Versailles Treaty which had ended WW I, carried out a campaign of racial purification, annexed Austria (1937), and part of Czechoslovakia (1938), and began WWII by attacking Poland in 1939. Germany was defeated again in 1945. The division of Germany into East and West, during the Cold War between the United States and Russia, consumed much of the German spirit for the remainder of the 20th century.