The Poem as Plant

Archetype and Metamorphosis in Goethe and Schlegel

by

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Although it is easy to highlight the differences separating the natural and the human sciences, what I want to draw attention to instead is a period during which concerted efforts were being made to *bridge* the natural sciences and the humanities, to turn poetry into science, and novels into philosophy. This was happening in both Britain and Germany by the end of the eighteenth century, but I am going to focus here on the somewhat smaller framework associated with Weimar Classicism. Weimar Classicism is of course interesting as a period in its own right. It rejected the Enlightenment's love affair with certainty as much as it refused to be simply assimilated into German Romanticism. Much of this was thanks to the energy and personalities of both Schiller and Goethe as the key figures of the period. But it was Goethe in particular who would come to define the precise nature of the period's resistance. For he understood perhaps better than anyone else the conceptual limits entailed by a commitment to only one point of view. Thus while it is Friedrich Schlegel who declared that "all art should become science and all science art," that indeed "poetry and philosophy should be made one,"[1] we must in fact turn first to Goethe if we are to find the person most wholly dedicated to the prospect of reworking the natural sciences altogether, to wresting them, so to speak, from the grasping hands of the mathematicians in order to give nature a chance to be perceived by more feeling minds. As Goethe remarked in later years, people forget "that science developed from poetry and they fail to take into consideration that a swing of the pendulum might beneficently reunite the two, at a higher level, and to mutual

[1] Friedrich Schlegel, Critical Fragments, in: Peter Firchow (ed. and trans.), Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments, Minneapolis, MN, 1971, Critical Fragment no. 115, p. 157. Translation corresponds to volume 2 of the Kritische-Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, Hans Eichner (ed.), Paderborn 1958–present, p. 161.

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advantage."[2] Goethe sought precisely such "mutual advantage" when it came to his own poetic science, and it will form the background for my discussion of the archetypal figure of Prometheus and his particular stages of metamorphoses in the hands of Goethe and Schlegel.

1. Goethe's Poetic Science

It is perhaps useful to begin with a few remarks on some of the defining features of Goethe's scientific theory. Let me say at the outset, however, that while Goethe has a body of work dedicated to the scientific treatment of these concepts – we can be reminded here of his didactic studies of geology, morphology, meteorology, and physics – these concepts can one and all be illustrated by appealing to his poetic or literary presentations of them, and it will be from this body of work that I will be primarily drawing my examples. Leaving aside, therefore, the specific manner by which the concept of "polarity" functions within Goethe's scientific discussion of colour, it is enough to broadly describe this important concept in terms of an unceasing interplay or movement between opposing poles. The energy at work in nature represented, in this sense, a pendulum in so far as the achievement of any point of stasis inexorably called out for its opposition. The destabilizing effect of this logic kept all natural phenomena in motion according to Goethe – systole and diastole, expansion and retraction, the blue of the night calling out for the yellow of the day – but the inner source of this motion was in fact a drive for completion, where completion was specifically understood to be a unity of opposing forces, a unity in tension or dynamic equilibrium, as opposed to some kind of whole where differences were to be collapsed into identity. There is one necessary result of this view of completion, for through it the notion of identity itself has changed – changed to something that is porous, fluid, plastic, to something that can no longer be located, metaphysically or otherwise, as the geographical center of a thing. Goethe makes this point repeatedly, but two places capture it especially well. First, in "Epirrhema": "You must, when contemplating nature / Attend to this, in each and every feature / There's nothing outside and nothing within / She's inside out and outside in / Thus will you grasp, with no delay / The holy secret, clear as day / […]No living thing is One I say /

[2] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, History of the Printed Brochure [1822], in: Bertha Mueller (trans.), Goethe's Botanical Writings, Woodbridge, CT, 1952 [no page number given].

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But always Many."[3] And second, it is captured in his address to the physicist, particularly the last lines: "*Natur hat weder Kern / Noch Schale / Alles ist sie mit einem Male / Dich prüfe du nur allermeist / Ob du Kern oder Schale seist.*"[4]

This displacement of identity or blurring of the distinction between inside and outside, between many and one, belongs to Goethe's views regarding the constant metamorphoses taking place in nature, the means by which the archetype within and the environment without join forces together in shaping a given organism. In his "Parabasis" Goethe emphasizes the constant rearrangement of shapes as a result of these forces: "Years ago the mind with pleasure / Keenly could investigate / Could experience the measure / Nature lives by to create / And it is the One Eternal / Multiply self-manifest / Small the big is, big the small / All things to their type attest / Self-insistent, always changing / Near and far and far and near / Birth of shapes, their rearranging / Wonder of wonders, I am here."[5]

Here I just want note in passing Goethe's title. "Parabasis" was a technique used in Greek comedy – we have examples of it in Aristophanes, and the case in the *Birds* is particularly apposite – to interrupt the play so that the many, the chorus, could address the audience in the guise of a poet offering first, an ode to the gods, secondly, an "Epirrhema" containing advice meant to define the ode more precisely (this is how an epirrhema came to be used by grammarians in the nineteenth century when defining the task of adverbial modifiers), and finally, an "Anteepirrhema" containing a commentary on events that were local, a complaint regarding local politics, for example. If Goethe's "Epirrehma" offers earnest council regarding nature's holy secret, his "Antepirrehma" points to the fact that nature is both local and universal at once. "When man takes a step he goes forward," Goethe had said, "when nature takes a step she goes in all directions at once." In "Antepirrehma" this is captured in the figure of nature as weaver: "Thus view with unassuming eyes / The eternal weaver's masterpiece / One pedal shifts a thousand strands / The shuttles back and forward flying / Each fluent strand with each complying / One stroke a thousand links commands / No

[3] J. W. von Goethe, Epirrhema [c. 1819], in: Christopher Middleton (trans.), Goethe's Collected Works, vol. 1, Princeton 1994, p. 159.

[4] J. W. von Goethe, Allerdings: Dem Physiker [1820], in: Middleton, Goethe's Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 236. Translated by Michael Hamburger: "Nature has neither core / Nor outer rind / Being all things at once / It's you yourself you should scrutinize to see / Whether you're center or periphery" (same volume, p. 237).

[5] J. W. von Goethe, Parabasis [c. 1820], in: Middleton (trans.), Goethe's Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 155.

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patchwork, this, of rag and tatter / Since time began she plots the matter / So may the eternal master, very deft / Insert with confidence the weft."[6]

The "weft" here, I take it, refers us again to the role played by the archetype during metamorphoses. Goethe described his discovery of this notion during his trip to Italy in the 1780s: "While walking in the Public Gardens of Palermo," as he put it in his diary, "it came to me in a flash that in the organ of the plant which we are accustomed to call the *leaf* lies the true Proteus who can hide or reveal himself in all vegetal formations."[7] "From top to bottom, a plant is all leaf, united so inseparably with the future bud that one cannot be imagined without the other."[8] It was during this period that Goethe joyfully wrote to Charlotte von Stein who had remained, impatient and bored without him, in Weimar: "I cannot tell you how readable the book of nature is becoming for me; my long efforts at deciphering, letter by letter, have helped me; now all of a sudden it is having its effect, and my quiet joy is inexpressible."[9]

Goethe assigned this ability to read the book of nature to what he called "intuitive perception," an ability to see the ideal archetype at work in the real natural object before one, a non-sensible intuition, in other words, that would have been forbidden within a Kantian framework. Indeed Goethe's long and productive friendship with Schiller – "the Kantian" as Goethe always referred to him – dates from their first, testy exchange over Goethe's ideas on this point, and his retelling of this presents it best. Having ended up at Schiller's house at the end of the evening, "I gave an enthusiastic description of the metamorphoses of plants, and with a few characteristic strokes of the pen I caused a symbolic plant to spring up before his eyes," he explains. "But when I stopped he shook his head and said, 'That is not an observation from experience. That is an idea.' Taken aback and somewhat annoyed, I paused … my old resentment began to rise in me. I collected my wits, however, and said, 'Then I may rejoice that I have ideas without knowing it, and can even see them with my own eyes'."[10] This was a kind of seeing that Goethe later identified with Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, quoting from § 77 in particular with its discussion of an archetypal intuition.

[6] J. W. von Goethe, Antepirrhema [c. 1819], in: Middleton (trans.), Goethe's Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 163.

[7] J. W. von Goethe, Italian Journey [1786–1788], Wystan Hugh Auden / Elizabeth Mayer (trans.), London 1970, entry from July 31, 1787, p. 366.

[8] J. W. von Goethe, Italian Journey [1786–1788], in: Robert R. Heitner (trans.), Goethe's Collected Works, vol. 6; entry from May 17, 1787, p. 299.

[9] J. W. von Goethe, Letter to C. von Stein [1786], in: Gordon L. Miller, The Metamorphosis of Plants, Boston 2009, p. vii.

[10] J. W. von Goethe, Fortunate Encounter [1794], in: Douglas Miller (trans.), The Collected Works of Goethe, vol. 12, p. 20.

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Kant of course forbade this, but for Goethe, "Impelled from the start by an inner need, I had striven unconsciously and incessantly toward primal image and prototype, and had even succeeded in building up a method of representing it which conformed to nature. Thus there was nothing further to prevent me from boldly embarking on this 'adventure of reason' (as the Sage of Königsberg himself called it)."[11]

With this account of the intuitive perception of an underlying archetypal unity in nature – the leaf for plants, the vertebrae for animals – it is important to resist the sense of these as static. They are indeed "protean" as Goethe called them, operating as productive driving forces within an organism, though constrained by the environment – Goethe thought that the seal, for example, was simply a dog whose shape had necessarily responded to its aquatic environment, a type of judgment which set the course for the development of transcendental morphology and its important advances in comparative anatomy during the nineteenth century – and constrained also by the limits of the archetype itself, such that, for example, the addition of horns meant a correlative loss in the total number of possible teeth. "For there has never existed an animal into whose jawbone teeth are pegged," Goethe explained, "that had a horn sprout out of its forehead; therefore a lion with a horn the Eternal Mother could never possibly make though she drew on all her potent resources."[12] The morphological plasticity of the archetype, in other words, was unbounded when it came to transformations in size or shape, but there were only so many vertebrae to work with from the start. This plasticity of the archetype was on view everywhere in the serial transformations of a plant moving through stages of sprouting, vegetative growth, and finally flowering and seed production. As a careful observer of these transformations, Goethe concluded that

> we must be content to train ourselves to bring these manifestations into relationship in opposing directions, backward and forward. For we might equally say that a stamen is a contracted petal as that a petal is a stamen in a state of expansion; or that a sepal is a contracted stem leaf approaching a certain stage of refinement, as that a stem leaf is a sepal expanded by the influx of cruder saps. We may likewise say of the stem that it is an expanded flower and fruit, just as we assumed that the flower and fruit are a contracted stem.[13]

In the case of plants, it must be emphasized, moreover, that the work of the archetype pushed the organism through *progressive* stages of metamorphoses.

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[11] J. W. von Goethe, Judgment through Intuitive Perception [1817], in: D. Miller (trans.), The Collected Works of Goethe, vol. 12, p. 31.

[12] J. W. von Goethe, Metamorphoses of Animals [1806], in: Middleton (trans.), The Collected Works of Goethe, vol. 1, p. 163.

[13] J. W. von Goethe, Metamorphosis of Plants [didactic essay, 1790], in: Mueller (trans.), Goethe's Botanical Writings, section XVIII, nos. 120, 121, pp. 77–78.

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In his didactic essay on the metamorphosis of plants, Goethe introduced technical vocabulary in order to discuss the undulating dialectic of expansion and retraction, that is plant growth from seed to its highest point of intensification, that is, the archetypal leaf become flower. Leaving technical vocabulary aside, Goethe fulfilled Schlegel's call for science to become art and art science, perhaps nowhere better than in his elegy from 1798 dedicated to the metamorphosis of plants. And although it is too long a piece to discuss here, when we come to the very end of this essay we will need to have in mind at least the last piece of the elegy, the point at which Goethe describes his own relationship to his lover, Cristiane Vulpe, in terms of the same processes of intensification and flowering. "Think thou also how from sweet acquaintance / The power of friendship grew within our hearts," Goethe writes, "to ripen at long last to fruitful love! / Think how our tender sentiments, unfolding / Took now this form, now that, in swift succession! / Rejoice the light of day! Love, sanctified / Strives for the highest fruit – to look at life / In the same light, that lovers may together / In harmony seek out the higher world!"[14]

2. The Myth of Prometheus

With the main contours of Goethe's scientific theory in view, I now want to move to Goethe's treatment of Prometheus as a special locus for connecting poetry and science during this time period. Why Prometheus? The first point to raise is of course the widespread attraction yielded by this figure both before, but especially after the French Revolution. The myth of Prometheus was told and reworked in various ways by all manner of poets and writers from Goethe to Schlegel and Hoffman in Germany, to the famous triad that was Percy Shelly, Lord Byron, and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelly in England. Prometheus stood as much for genius and productive creativity as for revolution and rebellion. He was notorious for his hubristic meddling with nature – a meddling which in Mary Shelly's telling led to disastrous if unintended consequences – and above all, for his folly in rejecting the gods. The possibilities, it seemed, were endless when it came to this protean figure.

In Goethe's own case, the mythical Titan was taken up first in a verse play, later in a hymn, and finally as a key figure in a *Festspiel* entitled "Pandora." It was indeed just after completing "Pandora" that Goethe began a series

[14] J. W. von Goethe, Metamorphosis of Plants [poem, 1798], in: Heinz Norden (trans.), Goethe's Botanical Writings, pp. 173–174.

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of dictations in 1809 that would lead to his autobiography, *Poetry and Truth*. Covering the years from his childhood up to the year 1775, Goethe paused to describe his initial attraction to Prometheus – the verse play had been composed in 1773, the hymn in 1775 – for there were two key attributes that had drawn him to the myth. First, there was Prometheus's isolation, his radical separation from the gods. Second, there was Prometheus's prodigious productive talent. Goethe identified with both of these features. He had always been conscious of his self-reliance when it came to his own productive talents, of the sense, as Goethe wrote, that "in the final analysis a human being is always thrust back on oneself."[15] Describing his talent for *Poesie*, Goethe explains, "I was glad to make it the philosophical basis for my whole existence. The idea transformed itself into an image: I was struck by the old mythological figure of Prometheus, who was separated from the gods and populated the world for himself out of his own workshop."[16] Goethe knew that his best productions had been the result of solitude: "I imitated Prometheus by separating myself from the gods," he tells us, and so "[t]he myth of Prometheus came to life in me. I tailored the old titanic garments to my size, and without further reflection began to write a play."[17] Prometheus was the ideal *poetic* figure, according to Goethe, better than either Christ or Milton's Satan; Prometheus's special virtue lay in the fact that he was not a god but could still make man, that he was defiant of Zeus but in a manner that demonstrated, as Goethe put it, a "formative, generally passive resistance which acknowledges a superior authority but desires equality with it" nonetheless.[18]

From Gadamer's perspective, this aspect of Prometheus – the solitary creator of a world made by him and to some significant extent, therefore, *for* him – was the key to understanding Goethe's relationship to his own poetic productions. No less significant for Gadamer, however, was the fact that both the verse play "Prometheus" and the *Festspiel* "Pandora" were fragmentary pieces, in each case published "as-is," that is, as explicitly unfinished works. Now as we all know, and as was so nicely spelled out by Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe in *The Literary Absolute* for anyone who did not know it, the "fragment" stands as the master signifier for the Romantic School in philosophy. The special appeal held by the fragment for us today, however, will be its particular amenability to an organic reading of these texts. This is a point that will need to be developed more carefully as we go along.

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[15] J. W. von Goethe, Poetry and Truth, in: Heitner (trans.), Goethe's Collected Works, vol. 4, part 3, book 15, p. 468.

[16] J. W. von Goethe, Poetry and Truth, p. 469.

[17] J. W. von Goethe, Poetry and Truth, p. 469.

[18] J. W. von Goethe, Poetry and Truth, p. 470.

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For now, the immediate task is to lay out something of the myth itself, in order to make better sense of the changes made by Goethe as he "tailored the titan's garments down to size." The best place to start is no doubt with a few genealogical reminders. Prometheus belongs to the second generation of Titans. His father, Iapetus, was one of the sons born to Gaia and Uranus. When Iapetus grew older he married one of his brother Oceanus's daughters, an Oceanid named Clymene (or Asia in some accounts), and they together bore four sons: Menoetius, Atlas, Prometheus, and Epimetheus. When we first read about Prometheus – the name means "foreknowledge" – in Hesiod's *Theogony* (lines 507–616), he is introduced to us as a trickster. And the specific trick matters, since by having Zeus mistakenly choose bones wrapped in fat over beef hidden in a stomach, Prometheus has set a precedent for all subsequent human offerings to the gods. Outraged by these consequences, Zeus takes fire away altogether from the humans. When Prometheus is caught giving fire back to mankind, there is punishment to pay, and in each case it will be fearsome. As for the Titan, Zeus has him bound to a rock, sending an eagle – the traditional symbol of Zeus himself – to eat Prometheus's liver, which is a daily feast for the eagle given the Titan's immortality. For the humans, Zeus has Hephaestus, the blacksmith god of fire, create a woman out of clay and wind, with the demand that she be made to torment humanity. When Hesiod returns to the story in *Works and Days* (lines 42–105), this woman has a name, "Pandora," meaning "all gifts," and she has been sent by Zeus as a bride for Epimetheus. Prometheus, who has since been rescued by the Hero Hercules, immediately warns his brother against accepting Pandora as bride. Unable to worry about the future, however, Epimetheus reaches for the jar carried by his bride, and opening it releases evil, pain, and disease, closing it only in time to spare humans from the last of Pandora's gifts. This gift has its own significance for the plot insofar as the last gift was knowledge of the future, without which the humans can at least console themselves with the potentially false hope that things will get better. Aside from detailing the events themselves, Hesiod's account of Prometheus thus conveys a clear message regarding the need for obedience to the gods, and Prometheus's own legacy lies under a cloud insofar as it was ultimately his fault that so much pain and disease was brought to mankind.

This lesson is changed, however, in the next major treatment of the Prometheus myth. Initially intended as the first part of a trilogy, Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* (*Prometheus Unbound* was the sequel) depicts Zeus as an unjust tyrant, and Prometheus, who has helped Zeus overcome the Titan rebellion, ends up both betrayed and punished by the willful god. It is in Aeschylus therefore, that Prometheus's role as the benefactor of mankind

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is developed, insofar as he brings not only fire but also medicine, science, writing, and mathematics to the human race. Notice, however, that in neither Hesiod nor Aeschylus is Prometheus described as himself a creator of men. This aspect of the myth is added by later writers, by Sappho in passing (Fragment 207), and in greater detail by Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, 1.78f) and Plato (*Protagoras*, 320c–322a).[19] Ovid's discussion places Prometheus at the creation, where his task is now identical to Hephaestus's, at least insofar as he is to create men out of clay containing the wind needed to breathe life into them. As Ovid narrates it,

> Man was born: whether the god who made all else, designing a more perfect world, made man of his own divine seed and substance, or whether the new-made earth, but lately drawn away from heavenly ether, retained still some elements of its kindred sky – that earth, was mixed by the son of Iapetus with fresh, running water, and moulded into the form of the all-controlling gods. And while the other creatures on all fours look downwards, man was made by him to have an uplifted face, to hold his head erect in majesty and raise his eyes to the bright stars above. Thus earth, once crude and featureless, was changed and clothed itself with forms of men before unknown. The Golden Age was that first age, which, with no one to compel, without a law, of its own will, kept faith and did the right.[20]

In Plato's treatment, new details are added. We learn that while the gods were responsible for the actual creation of all mortal creatures out of earth and fire, it was left up to Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus to distribute characteristics that would serve as the defining features of each. Epimetheus proposes to be in charge of the distribution, leaving Prometheus for the final inspection. Lacking all forethought, however, Epimetheus uses up all of the characteristics he has on the animals, leaving nothing of any use for humans. It is with some exasperation, therefore, that Prometheus is forced to give the skills of Hephaestus and Athena to the newly made men as their only means of survival.

3. Prometheus – A Fragmentary Verse Play

With this rehearsal of the Prometheus myth in mind, we can turn to Goethe's own reworkings of the myth, a reworking which in each case showed him to be essentially refashioning its central elements in much the same manner of the archetype's transformations during metamorphosis. Indeed,

[19] Aesop describes Prometheus in this capacity more often than anyone, though typically in the context of an animal complaining to Prometheus about what characteristics he has or has not received, and thus ultimately in reference to Plato's account of Prometheus.

[20] Ovid, Metamorphoses, Frank Justus Miller (trans.), London 1984, book 1, lines 78–92, pp. 7–9 (translation emended in parts).

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the archetypal quality of Prometheus should not be forgotten, and we can in fact now make better sense of Goethe's later description of this period in terms suggesting an intuitive perception of Prometheus: "I was struck by the figure of Prometheus," Goethe tells us, "and the idea became an image."

In the dramatic fragment from 1773 we have a play with seven scenes, and Goethe will announce Prometheus's character in the opening lines: "I will not! Tell them that! And there's an end of it: I won't. Their will against mine. One against one – I'd call it even."[21] The drama here turns on Prometheus's refusal to accept an offer to rule the earth and defend the heavens, an offer that has been sent by Zeus via Mercury. Following Aeschylus, Goethe intimates that Prometheus has already done service for Zeus but has since become embittered. In Goethe's telling, part of this lies in Prometheus's recognition that Zeus the Almighty is just as much a servant to the fates as is Prometheus. Why should I serve a servant, Prometheus asks Mercury: "I am no god – and I think just as well of myself."[22] When Epimetheus comes to reason with his brother, telling him that it is a fair offer, that he is being stubborn and will end up alone and without the gods, Prometheus sends him away, repeating the point that he already has everything he could want: immortality, the freedom to say no, and above all, the ability to create in "whatever space my energies can fill."[23]

But what has Prometheus created? In this iteration he has produced beautiful statues. "Here is my world, my all!" he declares once Epimetheus has departed. "Here I know who I am! Here – all my wishes embodied in these figures, my spirit split a thousand ways yet whole in my beloved children."[24] In this scene Prometheus is both god and father to his race of men, each made in their father's image, each embodying his father's wishes. For all this, however, they are not alive. And it is at this point that Minerva, or Athena as she was called by Greeks, enters the stage. Now it bears remembering that Hephaestus and Athena were together the patrons of all useful arts. Athena was also the patron of all women's crafts and her fame as a weaver extended beyond her famous quarrel with Arachne (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6.1), to include her ability to weave together the affairs of the state, a model taken up by Plato in the *Statesman*. In the *Protagoras*, Plato had Prometheus give the skills of Hephaestus and Athena to humanity. In Goethe's verse play, it is Prometheus who has set the archetype, the weft, sculpting men in Pro-

[21] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], in: Frank Ryder (trans.), Goethe's Collected Works, vol. 7, p. 240.
[22] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], p. 240.
[23] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], p. 241.
[24] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], p. 242.

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metheus's own image out of clay, and it is Athena who will help bring them to life, aligning her thereby with the eternal weaver in "Antepirrhema." "Come," says Minerva, "I shall lead you to the sources of life, which Jupiter will not close off. Live they shall, and that through you."[25] "Look down, oh Zeus," Prometheus now declares, "upon my world. It lives, and I have shaped it in my likeness, a race to be like me, to suffer, weep, enjoy, to have its pleasure, and pay no heed to you – no more than I do."[26]

In the scenes that quickly follow, Goethe describes a Golden Age, during which Prometheus acts as a loving father, dispensing healing, justice, and advice to his newly-made men. They are a race that will suffer pain and be filled with joy; they are complete by way of their dual nature, the dynamic tension of opposing desires and goals filling each of them. Addressing his creations, Prometheus is reassuring: "You've not belied your nature, my children. You're lazy and industrious. Gently cruel and generously mean. Like all your brothers in this fate, like all the beasts, and like the gods."[27] It is at this point that the play will move to its closing scene, to what Gadamer described as the "living nerve of the entire drama."[28] And it begins with the entrance of Prometheus's favorite creation, the statue he'd greeted earlier in the play with the words: "And you Pandora, holy vessel of all gifts that please."[29] The change of patrimony has cleansed Goethe's Pandora of her woeful task, for she is a child of Prometheus now and has brought gifts that please. In this final scene, Pandora has come to tell her father of the confusing emotions aroused by her first sexual encounter, an encounter that left her partner weeping and weak from ecstasy. What is this thing that undid her, Pandora asks her father; Prometheus answers in one word: Death. What is that, she asks. Here Gadamer questions whether Prometheus could give a fair answer at all given that he is immortal.[30] In the verse lines that follow, Goethe undulates between sex and death as between poles of extremis. "Joy!," Pandora describes it, "As every limb, touched by the sound of music, moved and stirred and I was swept away on floods of melody."[31] "And all at last dissolves in sleep," Prometheus replies. "This life's

[25] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], p. 245.
[26] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], p. 246.
[27] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], p. 248.
[28] Hans-Georg Gadamer, On the Course of Human Spiritual Development: Studies of Goethe's Unfinished Writings, in: Robert H. Paslick (trans.), Literature and Philosophy in Dialogue, Albany 1994, p. 40.
[29] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], p. 244.
[30] Gadamer, On the Course of Human Spiritual Development: Studies of Goethe's Unfinished Writings, p. 39.
[31] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], p. 249.

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delight takes many forms, my father, its sorrow too."[32] As Gadamer reads it, the key to understanding this dialogue is the role of the limit insofar as sex combines together the opposing extremities of self-possession and loss of self, an event that can only be superseded in this effect by death, for death, as Prometheus defines it, is "when everything about you drowns in night, and inwardly, in your own depths of feeling, you enfold a world: *this* is man dying." "Oh father," Pandora begs, "let us die!"[33] But Goethe, as I see it, is not in fact interested in having this be the ending, for death understood in this manner, as a kind of final terminus for the subject, would cause it to collapse into self-identity. Plurality can be maintained in this case only so far as there is the promise of return. And thus the closing lines of the dramatic fragment. What happens after death, Pandora asks, and Prometheus replies: "When all – desire, joy, and suffering – dissipates itself in storms of pleasure, to be in blissful sleep restored, you'll come to life again, rejuvenated, to fear once more, once more to hope and yearn."[34]

In the months that followed Goethe's work on the fragmentary verse play, he penned two poems, one of which would go on to have something of a spectacular history. Goethe had had copies made of this poem, which was a hymn to Prometheus, and after handing over a few of these copies to friends, Goethe lost track of the piece altogether. In 1785, to his shock and dismay, Goethe discovered that Jacobi had taken the hymn and without Goethe's permission had included it as part of Jacobi's *Briefe über die Lehre Spinozas*. Goethe's piece in fact took on the role of catalyst for this text, since Jacobi claimed to have discovered Lessing's Spinozism – the supposed impetus for the book – after the two had discussed Goethe's hymn. With Lessing safely dead, Jacobi could not resist the opportunity to reveal the writer for what he was: an Atheist, so far as Jacobi understood the matter, and a perfect exemplar of the generally ruinous nature of the Berlin Enlightenment. In response, Goethe hastily published his own brief "Study on Spinoza," and he felt glad that he and Herder had together rebuffed Jacobi who had travelled to Weimar ahead of the publication of the *Spinozabüchlein* in order to rally the two to his side – an unlikely event in the case of Herder, given that only months later he would present a Latin copy of Spinoza's *Ethics* to Goethe with the inscription: "Let Spinoza be always for you the holy Christ." Recalling this episode, and the fateful role played by his Prometheus hymn, Goethe said in his autobiography that the poem had "served as the tinder for an explosion which revealed and

[32] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], p. 249.
[33] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], p. 250.
[34] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [dramatic fragment, 1773], p. 250.

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brought to discussion the most secret concerns of worthy men, concerns which, unknown even to them, slumbered in an otherwise very enlightened society. The fissure was opened so violently because of it, we lost one of our worthiest men, Mendelssohn."[35] For Mendelssohn had worked hard to defend his long-time friend from Jacobi's charges, and when amidst the strain of what had quickly come to be called the "Pantheism controversy," Mendelssohn fell sick and died, many blamed Jacobi for having brought about an untimely death.

I mentioned that Goethe had written two poems in the months following his work on the verse play and indeed these two poems are, in some sense, complete only when taken together insofar as they then present us with a dialectical opposition as much of style as substance. In "Prometheus," Goethe has taken up the myth again. And as in the dramatic fragment, this Prometheus is truculent and unabashed before the gods. Here too, Goethe picks up the sense of bitterness and betrayal found in Aeschylus's account. "Once too, a child, not knowing where to turn," Prometheus intones, "I raised bewildered eyes up to the sun, as if above there were an ear to hear my complaint, a heart like mine to take pity on the oppressed."[36] It was a complaint that remained unanswered, and so, unaided by the gods, Prometheus had had to strike out on his own, to serve as his own living god and source of all creation. Emphasizing the living, changeable character of human life, Prometheus looks up to heaven and declares: "Here I sit, forming men / In my image / A race to resemble me / To suffer, to weep / To enjoy, to be glad / And never to heed you / Like me."[37] These sentiments stand in polar opposition to those expressed in the partner piece, Goethe's "Ganymede." In Greek mythology, Ganymede was a Trojan prince and hero, famous above all for his great beauty. It was because of such famed beauty that Zeus had abducted Ganymede, assuming the shape of an eagle, and flying with him up to Olympus where he would replace Zeus's daughter Hebe as cupbearer to the gods. But there is no mention of an abduction in Goethe's poem: the verses here are lush, and the sentiment soft and open-hearted. God is one with nature, and each encompasses the youth in loving embrace. "How in the morning gleam / All around you glow at me / Springtime, beloved!" the poem begins. "I stretch out, swoon / And your flowers, your grass / Rush to my heart." Within moments Ganymede is rising up from earth's couch: "I am coming," he calls out to heaven, "Take me,

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[35] J. W. von Goethe, Poetry and Truth, in: Heitner (trans.), Goethe's Collected Works, p. 469.

[36] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [poem, 1773], in: Hamburger (trans.),Goethe's Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 29.

[37] J. W. von Goethe, Prometheus [poem, 1773], p. 29.

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take me / Clouds, in your lap / Upward / Embraced embracing! / Upward to your breast / All-loving father."[38]

4. Schlegel's Universal Poetry

At this point I want to introduce Schlegel into our discussion, for it is in Schlegel's *Lucinde* that we find our next important appearance of Prometheus, and Goethe's subsequent *Festspiel* will bear important echoes of it. Schlegel's *Lucinde* appeared in 1799, sandwiched between his *Athenaeum Fragments* which had appeared the year before, and the *Ideas* – a text sometimes described as the fragmented mirror of *Lucinde* – in 1800. *Lucinde* was itself a fragmentary text, however, and as merely part one of an intended four-part cycle it remained incomplete. In the *Athenaeum*, one year earlier, Schlegel had defined the romantic text as one that remained in a state of becoming, as he put it, "that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never finished."[39] And that was precisely the case with *Lucinde*: it was left by Schlegel in a state of becoming, forever attempting to become a novel, forever tempting its readers to see it as complete, despite the shape it was in. And *Lucinde* did have its share of readers. It was enormously popular, the most successful by far of all the writings coming out of the German Romantic school in terms of gathering together a wide audience.

It was also highly criticized. It was censured by the moralizers for its scandalous account of the love affair between its protagonists, Julius and Lucinde, a scandal all the more outrageous insofar as the story was understood by everyone to be a thinly veiled autobiographical account of Schlegel's own relationship with his partner, Moses Mendelssohn's daughter, Dorothea Veit. And it was defamed as nonsense and junk by the literary critics. This was perhaps to be expected given the unexpected contours of *Lucinde*. Schlegel himself described the text as a 'shaped, artistic chaos.' The thirteen sections of *Lucinde* may have been interconnected, but not sequentially in the formal manner of a story unfolding, and Schlegel made frequent use of the Greek *parabasis* throughout, having sections end abruptly in the face of an interruption – someone calls, a task must be attended to, the food arrives – leaving it open to the reader to consider the status of the subsequent sections: was this an ode to the gods, was it the ephirrema, and so on.

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[38] J. W. von Goethe, Ganymede [1774], in: Middleton (trans.), Goethe's Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 33.

[39] Friedrich Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragments, in: Peter Firchow (ed. and trans.), Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments, Minneapolis 1971, Athenaeum Fragment no. 116, p. 175.

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Some sections took on the style of straightforward narratives, others were written as letters, though letters written during time periods both past and future to the events narrated in the other sections. By combining these styles Schlegel was attempting to create a true *Romantische Poesie*, a production he had described in the *Athenaeum* as universal and progressive. "Its goal," as he stated it there, "is not merely to reunite all the separate forms of poetry, and to put poetry in contact with philosophy and rhetoric. It also wants to and should now mix, and then fuse, poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and that of nature; to make poetry lively and social, and to make life and society poetic."[40] And so, heedless of his future critics, Schlegel allowed *Lucinde* to take its own shape. "I resolved to begin for you this poem of truth," Julius imagines himself telling Lucinde. "That is how the first gem of that wonderful plant of love and caprice was conceived. And as freely as it sprouted, I thought, should it also grow and run wild; and never, from a base love of order and frugality, will I prune its living fullness of superfluous leaves and branches."[41] For Schlegel, poetry was meant to manifest the infinite abundance of life, mirroring its profusion of forms, its perpetual open-endedness and becoming. Like Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura*, universal poetry, as Schlegel put it, "can hover in the middle between the portrayed and the portrayer, free from all real and ideal interests, and then raise its reflection to a higher power in an endless series of mirrors."[42] It was the task of *Lucinde*, as Schlegel saw it therefore, to demonstrate the very possibility of *Poesie* achieving such heights.

Prometheus appears suddenly in *Lucinde*, interrupting Julius's reverie in the section entitled an "Idyll of Idleness." Julius had been contemplating, with some resentment, the emphasis placed at all times on the virtue of industry, of activity for the sake of itself. "What's the point," Julius asks himself, "of this unremitting aspiration and progress without rest and purpose? Can this storm and stress provide nourishing sap or beautiful form to the infinite plant of humanity, growing unnoticed by itself and cultivating itself? This empty, restless activity is nothing but a Nordic barbarity."[43] In its stead, Julius proposes organic cultivation: "industry and utility are the angels of death," he declares, "only calmly and gently, in the sacred tranquility of true passivity, can one remember one's whole ego and contemplate the world and life."[44] It is at this point that a vision is forced upon Julius: he is

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[40] Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment no. 116, p. 175.

[41] Friedrich Schlegel, Lucinde [1799], in: Firchow (ed. and trans.), Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments, Minneapolis 1971, p. 64.

[42] Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment no. 116, p. 175.

[43] Schlegel, Lucinde, p. 65.

[44] Schlegel, Lucinde, pp. 65–66.

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suddenly invisible and inside a theatre. The audience is vast, the onlookers seem youthful and happy, full of eager anticipation of the doings on stage. The stage itself is divided. On one side we see Prometheus, bound in chains and being whipped by his overseers. He is surrounded by glue and materials, and stands working, like Hephaestus, before a forge where he is making men. The overseers throw the new humans into the audience as fast as Prometheus produces them, into an audience where they quickly become indistinguishable from the others. Facing Prometheus from the other side of the stage is Hercules, sitting and relaxed. Described here as the "God of the Gardens," Hercules has Hebe, Zeus's daughter, the goddess of youth and cupbearer to the gods, on his lap, and he is seated between Cupid and "lovely, naked Venus." The scene switches to a conversation in the audience, for Prometheus's newly made men are already critical of their father, complaining that he's gone about their creation in the wrong way: "How can anyone want to create human beings all by himself? Those aren't the proper tools at all" says one. "In that respect our friend Hercules was much more sensible – he could keep fifty girls busy during a night for the good of humanity, and heroic girls to boot."[45] Hercules had led a busy career, it was true, but his goal had always been idle leisure, and for that reason he had finally become a god. "Not so this Prometheus," the speaker continues, "the inventor of education and enlightenment. It's from him you inherited your inability to stay put and your need to be constantly striving." Prometheus has seduced mankind into working, and "now he has to work, whether he wants to or not."[46] And so the former Titan, in Schlegel's retelling, is here reduced to the status of mankind, bound to busyness and productivity, goaded ever onward by a Kantian demand for cultivation. His productions are forged out of matter and glue; mechanically produced, they are all copies of their father, not a one distinguishable from the other. Hercules, by contrast, the god of the gardens, is capable of organic generation and can thus leave nature to cultivate itself according to subterranean cycles of reproduction and growth. The "allegorical comedy," as Schlegel refers to Julius's vision, ends as abruptly as it began, and the section is finished.

5. Pandora – A Festival Play

When Goethe returned to the question of Prometheus for a third time, he seems to have taken the lesson regarding Hercules. Goethe denominated

[45] Schlegel, Lucinde, p. 67.
[46] Schlegel, Lucinde, p. 68.

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the play a *Festspiel* and published it unfinished in 1807 as a challenge for its readers, later assigning it a privileged position as the piece intended by him to close his collected works. In Goethe's set directions for the play, the stage, as in Julius's vision, is divided. Prometheus's side is constructed of rocky mountains, with rough caverns for dwellings and winding, asymmetrical pathways to connect them. The other half of the stage belongs to Epimetheus. Here there are wooden buildings furnished with furs and rugs, with fruit trees and the sense of cultivated gardens. The stage sets up the opposition between the two brothers, though it also suggested Aesop's fable of Prometheus and the two roads, wherein the rougher path led to freedom and the smoother one to slavery.[47] The play is listed as "Pandora" in Goethe's collected works, though Goethe's working title was always "Pandora's Return," since his initial plan – one we know from his notes – called for subsequent scenes regarding her reunion with Epimetheus.

Pandora is in fact present in her absence insofar as much of the play revolves around Epimetheus's longing for her. He has not seen her since the night she gave birth to twin daughters, taking the one most like her, Elpore, with her, and leaving the other, Epimeleia behind. Epimeleia, who is thoughtful though not brooding like her father, has spent her life looking after Epimetheus. As for her sister, Elpore, she comes to Epimetheus only in his dreams. In Greek "Elpore" means "hope" and she serves therefore as a double-signifier in Goethe's *Festspiel*: she is the hope that was left for mankind once Pandora's vessel was closed – closed, that is, before there was time for foreknowledge to escape with the rest of her gifts – but hers is also a false hope in much the same manner that Pandora's gifts were false. When she comes to Epimetheus each night in his dreams he beseeches her for news of Pandora and the possibility of her return: "Will she love me?" he asks. "Oh yes." "Will we be reunited?" "Yes." "True and faithful – never part again?" "Why, yes. Yes, why, yes."[48]

If Epimetheus has become a creature of the night, most alive when he is dreaming, Prometheus is a man at work in the sun. As in *Lucinde*, this Prometheus is hard at work: "all industriousness," he declares in his opening lines, "that's manly and worthiest belongs to morning; it alone gives all the day nutriment, comfort, pleasure to fill the weary hours."[49] And as for Schlegel, Prometheus has been fully identified with Hephaestus, leading now a team of blacksmiths, hard at work at their forge. "Where you go

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[47] Aesop, no. 535; see also Hercules choosing between two roads in Xenophon, Memorabilia 2.1.21; and Hesiod, Works and Days, 285.

[48] J. W. von Goethe, Pandora [1808], in: Hamburger (trans.), Goethe's Collected Works, vol. 8, p. 229.

[49] J. W. von Goethe, Pandora, p. 222.

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you'll find no peace," he tells the men; "such was the destiny of men and animals in whose rough image better destiny I shaped, that one another, single or conjoined in hordes, they struggle and in hatred come together and conflict."[50] If this war-like state is their *better* destiny, then as in *Lucinde*, the path of cultivation wrought by this creator is again that led by Kant's social unsociability, a history whose telic unfolding requires pathological enforcement if its aims are ever to be realized.

The real action of *Pandora* does not in the end, however, turn on Prometheus or indeed on anyone of his generation. In his place stands his son, Phileros, whose name points us back to the organic god and lover, Hercules. Phileros is in love with Epimeleia, but when he mistakes a chance meeting for a deliberate act of betrayal, he attacks her, only to be stopped at the last moment by his father. Cursing his son, Prometheus demands his immediate exile. In the final, dramatic scene, with the forests blazing around him, Phileros plunges to his death in the sea, only to be resurrected at the behest of Eos, goddess of the dawn: "Only gods can will his rescue," she tells Prometheus, "Can restore him, born anew."[51] Phileros emerges from sea, surrounded by Oceanids, and reborn as Dionysius, "the thyrsus in his hands, he strides triumphant now, a god."[52] With this metamorphosis Goethe has gathered together all the elements of the Prometheus archetype and worked their transformation. For in Hesiod it was "Deucalion" – or "new wine" – who was Prometheus's son and direct descendent of the Oceanids. His wife was the fiery "Pyrrha," daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora. And together they survive the deluge sent by Zeus to destroy Prometheus's race of men, repopulating the world together in its aftermath. When Prometheus steals fire for mankind, it is carried in a fennel stalk, but it is a fennel *staff*, wrapped in ivy, that serves as the thyrsus of Dionysius. All that is missing for Phileros, therefore, is a wife. "From the waters Phileros emerges," Goethe now writes, "From the flames appears Epimeleia; they encounter, one within the other feels whole selfhood, wholly feels the other. So, made one in love and doubly glorious, they receive the world. At once from Heaven, Word and Deed descend on them in blessing, gifts descend, foreknowledge to neither."[53] Phileros and Epimeleia are now reunited, baptized by fire and water; they have been reborn, and their "doubly glorious" union occurs at a higher level. Epimetheus, however, remains unrequited, and the unresolved oppositions between the two brothers, father and son, Elpore and Epime-

[50] J. W. von Goethe, Pandora, p. 226.
[51] J. W. von Goethe, Pandora, p. 244.
[52] J. W. von Goethe, Pandora, p. 245.
[53] J. W. von Goethe, Pandora, p. 246.

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leia, remain in dynamic tension. In this version, moreover, Prometheus no longer has the final word. It belongs to Eos, who tells him in closing, "eternal beauty is the work of the gods, let them conduct it."[54]

6. Writing Like a Plant

In Gadamer's most extended treatment of Goethe, it was the unfinished character of Goethe's texts dealing with Prometheus that attracted him. As Gadamer introduced these: "Everything unfinished points beyond itself to that which is still missing, to that which alone could confer meaning on the completed work."[55] The fragment, in this sense, is radically destabilized. Unfinished and inviting completion, it opens itself up to interpretation; since it will never in fact be finished, however, it must remain forever in a state of becoming. But if, as Gadamer argues, experience means openness and insight into the incomplete, non-closed character of life, then the fragment represents something like organic life itself, and our experience of the fragment will be much like our experience of nature. As Schlegel saw it, the fragment was indeed best understood via appeal to the vocabularies of life. For him, the experience or critical taking up of the fragment, attempting its imagined, ideal whole, was also the key to bridging philosophy and history, to dislocating the historically bound interpreter. It was precisely because such completion could never occur that criticism could become fragmentary itself and thereby be taken up into an infinite activity and, like nature, remain in a state of infinite becoming.[56]

Schlegel's account is in this sense encompassed by what Gadamer has to say about the *Vollzug*. It is a complicated notion, and the first point Gadamer makes regarding it is that the *Vollzug* is an experience which lets the divine emerge. His reference here is to cultic practices, and the fact that Goethe denominated *Pandora* specifically as a *Festspiel* suddenly makes sense in light of this since the festival act, according to Gadamer, permits the emergence of the divine as a living event. At this moment, Gadamer says, the art work comes forth. "One reads a poem," he explains. "One reads it again. One goes through it and it goes along with one. It is as if the poem began to speak, as if it began to sing and one sings along with

[54] J. W. von Goethe, Pandora, p. 246.

[55] Gadamer, On the Course of Human Spiritual Development: Studies of Goethe's Unfinished Writings, p. 31.

[56] See for example, Friedrich Schlegel, Lessings Gedanken und Meinungen, Leipzig 1804, vol. 1, pp. 39–44; and On the Combinatory Spirit, Kritische-Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, Paderborn 1958–present, vol. 8, p. 82.

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it."[57] Only a genius could produce a poem like this. As Goethe put it to Eckermann: "For what is genius but that productive power by which deeds arise that can display themselves before God and nature, and are therefore permanent, and produce results. All Mozart's works are of this kind; there lies in them a productive power which operates upon generation after generation, and still is not wasted or consumed."[58] For Gadamer, the means by which one takes up or harvests this productive power is by reading the work of art. *Lesen, Zusammenlesen, Auslesen, Auflesen, Verlesen*, Gadamer ties these together by way of their root term *Lese*, a word associated with harvest, "that is to say the harvest of grapes, which persist in the harvest."[59] In Gadamer's usage, it is during this harvest that "the design comes forth thanks to the means possessed by the language of art … which in the flow of its play builds up the *Gestalt*," a design which "takes shape without any critical distance from the event. The event of emerging as experienced by the viewer, hearer or reader, that is, the performance as experienced – the *Vollzug* – is the interpretation."[60] It may have been vegetable genius that lay behind Goethe's ability to forever "read the book of nature," but for reading the work of art, therefore, it was the productive genius of Mozart and of Goethe himself that allowed for the interpretation, the *Vollzug*, to emerge.

Now what I want to do in closing is just return for a moment to Schlegel's emphasis on organic models for understanding the precise nature of the fragment itself. *Lucinde* is a fragment and one can, therefore, approach it as a natural object, one open to having its natural history investigated. This perspective is necessarily external, but it can at least locate the object in a taxonomical vein. One can identify the first six sections as an answer to the question "what is it" or in this case, "who is Julius." The central section covering Julius's apprenticeship can be seen to form the basis of a genealogical inquiry of "how did Julius come to be who he is," and the final six sections as providing material for speculative considerations regarding future patterns of development and growth.

But the true genius of *Lucinde*, as I see it, lies in the fact that Schlegel was able also to write it from the *inside* of the organism, from the plant's own perspective, so to speak. As Schlegel stated the aims of this kind of writing, "it is capable of the highest and most diverse development, not merely from the inside out but also from the outside in; for, in what should

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[57] Hans-Georg Gadamer, Artworks in Word and Image (1992), in: Theory, Culture & Society, 23 (1), p. 75.

[58] J. W. von Goethe, Conversations with Eckermann, Wallace Wood (trans.), Washington / London 1901; entry for Tuesday, March 11, 1828, p. 248.

[59] Gadamer, Artworks in Word and Image, p. 76.

[60] Gadamer, Artworks in Word and Image, p. 77.

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be the whole of its creation, it organizes all parts alike."[61] These are words that take us back, of course, to Goethe's "Epirrhema" and its revelation of nature's holy secret: "There's nothing outside and nothing within / She's inside out and outside in." And it makes sense of Schlegel's use of interruptions throughout the text, for as every botanist knows, it is a sudden impact from the outside that yields flowering in a plant. The interrupting vision of Prometheus follows, you will remember, immediately upon Julius's attack on industriousness for its own sake, after, that is, he has declared:

> Really, we shouldn't neglect the study of idleness so criminally, but make it into an art and a science, even into a religion! In a word: the more divine a man or a work of man is, the more it resembles a plant; of all the forms of nature, this form is the most moral and the most beautiful. And so the highest, most perfect mode of life would actually be nothing more than *pure vegetating*.[62]

In *Lucinde* the flowering yielded by the impact of the Prometheus vision is the discovery that Lucinde is with child. The metamorphosis during Julius's apprenticeship was incomplete; it was only a stage in a progressive, universal series. What is required now is the creation of new life. In the same manner, *Pandora* ends with the union of Phileros and Epimeleia; the son who is reborn as a god does not return to his father as in the Christian myth, but instead takes a wife. His reign will be organic, a festival, one celebrating the play of life.

Summary

This essay focuses on the attention paid to Prometheus by Goethe and Schlegel. Prometheus serves as an archetypal figure for Goethe, in particular, and as such the Titan can be viewed as a figure whose various appearances represent genuine metamorphoses or transformations of the archetype in much the same manner that Goethe takes the archetypes of leaf or vertebrae to function in the plant and animal kingdoms. Schlegel's treatment of Prometheus takes the organic analogy even further. In his fragmentary work *Lucinde* Schlegel exploits the metaphorical possibilities provided by plant life when thinking about not only the sessile structure of the text as a whole but indeed the internal literary devices capable of simulating the environmental impacts required for the flowering of the plot. The fact that Goethe and Schlegel deliberately leave their discussions in a fragmentary form is discussed in the final section of the essay in a manner that ties the open-ended quality of such productions to Gadamer's discussion of the *Vollzug* or performative character of poetry and other works of art.

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[61] Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment no. 116, p. 175.
[62] Schlegel, Lucinde, p. 66.

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Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag untersucht die besondere Aufmerksamkeit, welche Goethe und Schlegel der Figur des Prometheus widmen. Für Goethe ist dieser Titan eine archetypische Figur, da seine verschiedenen Erscheinungsweisen als echte Verwandlungen oder Metamorphosen gelten können. Prometheus erscheine exakt in derselben Weise wie der Archetyp des Blattes im Pflanzenreich oder der Archetyp des Wirbels im Tierreich. Schlegel treibt diese Analogie des Organischen in seiner Beschäftigung mit Prometheus sogar noch weiter. In seiner Fragment gebliebene *Lucinde* nutzt er die Potentiale, die in der Metapher des pflanzlichen Lebens liegen, um über die Struktur des Textes als ein gewachsenes Ganzes nachzudenken. Darüber hinaus stellt Schlegel intern-literarische Mittel auch als etwas dar, dass die Umwelt so beeinflussen könne, dass sie den „Plot" (Handlungsstruktur / Blumenbeet) erblühen lasse. Der Umstand, dass sowohl bei Goethe als auch Schlegel diese Erwägungen fragmentarischen Charakter besitzen, wird im letzten Teil des Aufsatzes in Bezug zu Gadamers Verständnis von „Vollzug", d. h. des performativen Charakters von Dichtung und Kunstwerken überhaupt, gesetzt.

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