The *Topos* of Golden Age in Friedrich Schlegel's Notion of Cultural Transfer from Antiquity to Early Nineteenth-Century Germany

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Golden Age *topos* as a memory box

In Western tradition, the *topos* of Golden Age is among the oldest myths survived to us. We can find its first written transcription in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (*Erga kai Hēmérai*, 700 BC). It is a farmer's almanac in which the author gives a reason for the present human condition of Iron Age that is characterised by hard agricultural labour. Humankind originated in Chronus' rule, during which lived a Golden Race and where there was no need for work. People were morally righteous and they could simply take what they needed for nourishment from the surrounding nature.[1] Originally, the myth of the Golden Age was used to explain and justify the burden of farming to people who had to work on fields.[2]

The cultural function of a myth was to legitimate a cultural institution by telling its story of origin.[3] The mode of argumentation used in mythological

1 HESIOD, XI.109-201. See also LOVEJOY/BOAS, 1997 (1935), pp. 24-31.

2 As Hans Blumenberg has emphasised, the ancient mythology was not simply irrational superstition, but it had necessary cultural and social function. BLUMENBERG, 1985 (1975), 3, 34f., 59, 63; FRANK, 1982, pp. 59-65.

3 Manfred Frank defines myth as *Beglaubigung* (legitimation or reinforcement) of social and cultural practices. FRANK, 1982, pp. 80f.

poetry was not logical inference, to be sure, but rhetorical persuasion. In the ancient art of rhetoric, *koinoì tópoi* (common places) referred to an entire warehouse of literary images.[4] The collection of *topoi* included arguments, motives and background settings that authors could utilise in order to convince their audience.This huge collection of rhetorical *topoi* was used to aid human memory when a *rhapsode* delivered an oral performance for audience, to give an example.

This classical collection of common places had a major impact on the formation of European culture. Golden Age has been an influential *topos* applied by countless Western authors in various historical situations from antiquity to the Middle Ages and modernity.[5] I suggest that this chain of tradition forms an instance of diachronic cultural transfer from antiquity to modernity. However, the function of the *topos* of Golden Age has changed as well during this process. For example, the introduction of Christianity triggered a complicated process of cultural transfer during which the Greek representation of Golden Age was fused and mixed with the *topos* of paradise from the Hebrew Genesis.

In this article I shall focus on Friedrich Schlegel's (1772-1829) analysis of the Roman way to use the *topos* of Golden Age. In other words, I present how Schlegel opened up this memory box at the turn of nineteenth century when German Romanticism was inaugurated. Because he was one of the most influential and famous writers of the early Romantic generation of the 1790s and continued to have an impact on the German-speaking public until the 1820s, I suggest that his opinions represent more than a generalisation of the understanding of this *topos* during the early nineteenth-century.

Golden Age and cultural transfer – Rome as displaced Greece

We find many references to the Golden Age in Friedrich Schlegel's works.[6] However, when it comes to the specific topic of cultural transfer, one cannot

4 CURTIUS, 1993 (1948), p. 79.

5 Many examples of this are analysed by LOVEJOY/BOAS, 1997 (1935) and BOAS 1997 (1948).

6 The theme of the Golden Age in Schlegel's philosophy of history shall be the topic of my forthcoming doctoral dissertation.

bypass a passage, in which Schlegel used the *topos* of Golden Age to analyse the cultural historical role of Rome as the link between the classical Greece and modern Europe. The main reason for his turning to the history of Rome was to analyse the influence of the antiquity on the European nation-building process at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[7] Schlegel's analysis of Rome is documented in his dialogue *Gespräch über die Poesie* (*Dialogue on Poetry*, 1800) that was originally published in *Athenäum*-magazine edited by the Schegel-brothers. As a part of the text, a character called Andrea reads an essay "Epochen der Dichtkunst" ("Epochs of Poetry").[8] As Ernst Behler and Roman Struc have emphasised, this small essay is probably "the first, almost excessively concise presentation of the universal as well as comparative history of literature".[9] By closely reading this text, I am able to research the displacement of the Golden Age *topos* from antiquity to the early nineteenth-century Germany.[10] My contribution shall show how this *topos* changed initially when it was taken from the Greek context to Rome and secondly from there to the early Romantic age by Schlegel.

The first significant opening of this memory box happened in Rome. It was Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro, 70-19 BC) who gave a political connotation to the meaning of Golden Age. For Hesiod, its purpose was to justified hard agricultural labour, but after Virgil, the Golden Age was transformed to a *topos* that legitimated political rule. Rulers wanted to claim that the present age

7 Because Schlegel is considered to be among the most important members of the early Romantic circle in Jena and Berlin, his literary theory and philosophy have been intensely studied, but his work as a historian has received much less attention from scholars. Thus far, Schlegel's view of Rome has not been researched in depth, when compared to all the studies on his notion of Greece. A list of relevant literature concerning Schlegel's notion of antiquity is provided by BARNETT, 2001. See also HEINER, 1972.

8 The interpretation of this small essay implicates a source critical difficulty. It seems impossible to verify what opinions are Schlegel's own and what belong to his various fictive mouthpieces. Furthermore, sometimes it seems that his fictive characters defend positions that he has already abandoned. As Behler and Struc have written about the English translation of this text: "the dialogue form allows the author to present his previous philosophical and critical positions, even if they stand in opposition to his later points of view" BEHLER/STRUC, 1968, p. 12. In other words, it is not relevant to ask which of the characters represents Schlegel's own opinion, but to focus on the problems and questions elaborated in the dialogue.

9 BEHLER/STRUC, 1968, p. 21.

10 On the concept of *displacement* see NIVALA, 2011.

was the new Golden Age and therefore invited famous authors to their court.[11] The memory box of Golden Age was opened in Rome in order that Virgil could deposit this new content into the *topos*. Schlegel's Andrea describes this process, the change of meaning of the Golden Age *topos,* as follows:

> For the course of a few generations everybody in Rome wanted to write poetry and everybody believed he had to court the Muses and help them along. And this, the Romans called their Golden Age of poetry. It was like a barren flower in the making [*Bildung*] of that nation.[12]

The regime of the first Roman Emperor Augustus (ruling time 27 BC-14 AD; originally Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, 63 BC-14 AD) was considered to be the most fruitful era of Latin literature in general. Virgil made an important change in the Golden Age *topos*: as after his time, the *topos* no longer referred to an innocent stage of the first humans as presented by Hesiod, but to the artistic inauguration of national literature. *Bildung dieser Nation* is a difficult phrase to translate in this quotation. *Bildung* could mean education or the formation of a human subject, in the sense of *Ausbildung*. However, in the beginning of the nineteenth century it also referred to the biological growth (formation) of a plant or limb. Therefore we must interpret the syntagm *Bildung dieser Nation* in the context of the entire sentence. Because Schlegel is applying here an organic background metaphor (comparing the creation of the Golden Age with growing a flower), he probably meant that Romans tried to breed or raise (*aufziehen*) a new Golden Age of poetry, but failed and the end result was a barren flower of civilisation. This new blooming of poetry should serve the making of Roman "nation" (*Nation*).

The making of the Roman culture and its difficulties to gain independence from the previous Greek models was a mirror for the early nineteenth-century Germany. In 1800, Schlegel referred to the well-known *topos* of the Augustan Golden Age, for it resembled the state of modern era for Schlegel. Both Rome and modern nation states had to invent their own origin and legitimate their

11 On Virgil's role in this transformation see especially MÄHL, 1965, pp. 50-94.

12 "Während einiger Menschenalter wollte alles dichten in Rom, und jeder glaubte, er müsse die Musen begünstigen und ihnen wieder aufhelfen; und das nannten sie ihre goldne Zeit der Poesie. Gleichsam die taube Blüte in der Bildung dieser Nation." KFSA II, p. 295. (KFSA = Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe.) Translation by Behler & Struc, translation is slightly modified. SCHLEGEL, 1968 (1800), pp. 65f.

status of a literary area able to produce high quality literature. This is what Virgil's *Aeneid* (29-19 BC) is about: it is an invented myth on the origin of Rome. Furthermore, during the Augustan Age, the relationship between the poets and political establishment was particularly close. In the quotation provided above, Schlegel mentions also Gaius Cilnius Maecenas (c. 74/64 BC-8 BC), who was a Roman statesman, an adviser of Emperor Augustus and a patron of letters. The etymology of the word *Mäzen* (patronage) comes from his name.

When Schlegel opened the Roman memory box of Golden Age at the turn of the nineteenth century, he was clearly conscious of how the original Greek content of this *topos* had been ideologically overwritten. Schlegel emphasises how it was the Romans themselves who wanted to call Augustus' rule a new Golden Age. Hence, this citation exemplifies how at least some past readers, such as Schlegel in this case, were not ignorant and passive to the tradition. Although Schlegel admits that the Roman version of this myth has had much influence on later generations, he also expresses critical distance to it. He claims that the fruits of the Augustan Age were infertile ("like a barren flower") and he does not take seriously the claim that this era really had been a new Golden Age of literature.

Although Schlegel was conscious of the historical load of this *topos*, he could not avoid opening himself the memory box from the early nineteenth-century perspective either. It seems that when he wrote about the making of the Roman *Nation*, he projected the early nineteenth-century German issue of cultural nationalism onto the ancient Rome. However, when it comes to the question of nationalism, one should note that Schlegel had been a republican cosmopolite during the 1790s for whom the building of nation did not yet include any of the aggressive implications of the later nineteenth-century nationalism. This kind of cosmopolitan mentality was especially typical to the early Romanticism at the turn of nineteenth century in contrast with the Late Romanticism of the 1820s.[13] Therefore Schlegel's worries about the creation of a German speaking culture were mostly connected with creating a new literary style for the modernity (i.e. early Romantic literature) and not with the formation of a great political power that would aim for the military domination of Europe. It was the older Schlegel in Vienna in 1815 who contributed to this kind of ideological project for Austrian rule. What the younger Schlegel had in mind in the year 1800 was still only "the Golden Age of poetry" and the

13 See NIVALA, 2013.

possibilities for its future recreation in his contemporary German speaking area.[14]

The necessity of a modern Golden Age

In *Gespräch über die Poesie* Schlegel presented the problem of the modern Golden Age: the building of a modern nation presupposed conscious creation and the invention of a Golden Age. In this sense, all modern nations had to imitate the Augustan Age and follow Virgil's model as the inaugurator of literature. After discussing the Roman notion of Golden Age, Schlegel's Andrea continues his speech about the so-called Golden Ages of literature during the modern period:

> The moderns have followed them; what occurred under Augustus and Maecenas prefigured Italy's cinquecentists. Louis XIV tried to force the same spiritual renaissance in France, the English, too, agreed to consider the taste during Queen Anne's reign as best. Henceforth, no nation wanted to remain without its Golden Age; each following age was even emptier and worse than the one before and what the Germans finally imagine to be their Golden Age, the dignity of this presentation prohibits from a more accurate description.[15]

According to Schlegel's interpretation, the artists and poets of the Italian Renaissance (the Cinquecentists of the sixteenth century), French classicism during the Sun King Louis XIV (1638/1643-1715) and the English literature when Anne Stuart (1665/1701-1714) was the Queen of England, all repeat this

14 The differentiation between *Kulturnation* and *Staatsnation* was first made by Friedrich Meinecke, who emphasised that cultural nationalism precedes political nationalism. See for instance OERGEL, 2006, pp. 1f. See also Juhana Saarelainen's article in this book.

15 "Die Modernen sind ihnen darin gefolgt; was unter Augustus und Mäcenas geschah, war eine Vorbedeutung auf die Cinquecenstisten Italiens. Ludwig der Vierzehnte versuchte denselben Frühling des Geistes in Frankreich zu erzwingen, auch die Engländer kamen überein, den Geschmack unter der Königin Anna für den besten zu halten, und keine Nation wollte fernerhin ohne ihr goldnes [sic] Zeitalter bleiben; jedes folgende war leerer und schlechter noch als das vorhergehende, und was sich die Deutschen als golden eingebildet haben, verbietet die Würde dieser Darstellung näher zu bezeichnen." KFSA II, p. 295. Translation by Behler & Struc.SCHLEGEL, 1968 (1800), pp. 65f.

same Roman model. It almost seems as if this *topos*, the memory box of Golden Age, had become an obsession for the modern era. Political leaders tried to declare their own age as the Golden Age of literature, hence enforcing both their own fame and the formation of a cultural nation. But the fruits were equally infertile in all those modern cases. Louis XIV opened the memory box of Golden Age in order to "force" a rebirth of the French cultural life. The English people had no other option than to follow them. As a rhetorical figure, the *topos* of Golden Age had an extremely persuasive and normative power in Schlegel's narrative.

It seems that since the Renaissance European states had to imitate antiquity in order to legitimate the making of cultural nation.[16] Schlegel claimed that the early nineteenth-century German intellectuals found themselves forced to imitate antiquity[17], but this meant actually only the imitation of Italian, French and English classicism. In other words, the Germans had to imitate something that was already an imitation.[18] Schlegel's somewhat cold attitude to the Romans is probably connected to his Protestant roots.[19] One should remember how Luther had already wanted to bypass the Latin mediation of the Bible and

16 Confer LACOUE-LABARTHE/NANCY, 1990, p. 299. This idea of Germany as a belated nation is criticised for instance by OERGEL, 2006, pp. 11, 92.

17 Schlegel argued that one should still imitate Greek antiquity in order to revise modern poetry: "Nicht *dieser und jener*, nicht ein einzelner *Lieblings-Dichter*, nicht die *lokale Form* oder das *individuelle Organ* soll nachgeahmt werden: denn *nie kann ein Individuum, ‚als solches', allgemeine Norm sein*. Die sittliche Fülle, die freie Gesetzmäßigkeit, die liberale Humanität, die schöne Ebenmaß, das zarte Gleichgewicht, die treffende Schicklichkeit, welche mehr oder weniger über die ganze Masse zerstreut sind; den vollkommnen [sic] Stil des goldnen [sic] Zeitalters, die Ächtheit [sic] und Reinheit der Griechischen Dichtarten, die Objektivität der Darstellung kurz den *Geist des Ganzen – die reine Griechheit* soll der moderne Dichter, welcher nach echter schöner Kunst streben will, sich zueignen." KFSA I, p. 346f. "One should not imitate *just anyone*, or a particular, *favorite poet*, or the *local form* or the individual organ: for *an individual 'as such' can never be a universal norm*. The modern poet who wants to strive for genuine, beautiful art should appropriate for himself the ethical abundance, the unfettered law-governedness, the liberal humanity, the beautiful proportions, the delicate equilibrium, the splendid appositeness that is more or less scattered over the entire mass. He should also approximate the perfect style of the Golden Age, the genuineness and purity of the Greek poetic forms, the objectivity of the representation – in short, *the spirit of the whole: pure Greekness*." Translation by Stuart Barnett. SCHLEGEL, 2001 (1795), p. 84.

18 Confer Plato's claim that all art is imitation of an appearance. PLATO, *Republic*, 595a-597e.

19 Confer ROECK, 2007, p. 6.

read the Greek version instead. It was typical for many nineteenth-century Germans – like for example Winckelmann, Hegel and Hölderlin in addition to Schlegel – to take Greece as a model instead of Rome that was already chosen by Italian, French and English people.[20] By imitating Greece, the German Philhellenists had the possibility to gain independence from the Latin examples. The power of rhetorical *topos* was so compelling for the nineteenth-century mind that one could not simply leave behind this pattern, but merely to search for a different model from Greece instead of the Latin model of *Romanity*.

Despite Schlegel's harsh criticism of Roman, Italian, French and English Golden Ages, his Andrea saves the most severe judgment for the German cultural life: "each following age was even emptier and worse than the one before and what the Germans finally imagine to be their Golden Age, the dignity of this presentation prohibits a more accurate description."[21] The supposed eighteenth-century Golden Age of German literature was something of such low quality that Andrea wants to save his listeners the shame to learn about the identity of the key authors of this supposed Golden Age.

As Ernst Robert Curtius discovered, later on in his career Schlegel actually had the courage to unveil what he did not want to mention in 1800, namely what the earlier eighteenth-century German critics had thought to be the Golden Age of German literature.[22] In his *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur* (*History of Ancient and Modern Literature*, 1812) lectures delivered in Vienna, Schlegel noticed ironically:

20 According to Suzanne L. Marchand: "This is only one of the many ironies of German philhellenism, that it owes some of its greatest debts to Latin writers and Roman copies of Greek statuary, to Italian humanists and French philosophes; access to things Greek was almost always mediated by the wider culture of Latin learning. But the Germans wished to see themselves as rediscoverers of a lost Arcadia and pioneers of a new kind of pedagogy. And the development of Germany's national self-identification with the Greeks, precisely in its explicit rejection of the culture of 'Augustan' neoclassicism, did create a new complex of ideas and ambitions." MARCHAND, 1996, p. 4.

21 " jedes folgende war leerer und schlechter noch als das vorhergehende, und was sich die Deutschen als golden eingebildet haben, verbietet die Würde dieser Darstellung näher zu bezeichnen." KFSA II, p. 295. English translation by Behler & Struc.SCHLEGEL, 1968 (1800), pp. 65f.

22 CURTIUS, 1993 (1948), pp. 273f.

> How relative the concept of a Golden Age is, at least in respect to our literature, how inclined one is to postpone [*verlegen*] it further and further […], is confirmed by the example of an author who truly claimed this. In one of his poems, Gottsched moves [*verlegt*] this happy Golden Age into the age of Frederick, the first king of Prussia. The authors that he praised as the classics of that period, who should be for German literature approximately what Virgil was for the Romans, or Corneille and Racine for the French, were especially Besser, Neukirch and Pietsch.[23]

Now we learn that also Andrea's mock on the supposed German Golden Age in *Gespräch über die Poesie* refered to that of Johann Gottfried Gottsched (1700-1766) who was a German philosopher, author and critic.[24] In a sense, he was Schlegel's precursor, but not one that he would value very high. No wonder that Schlegel did not want to mention in his earlier essay "those poets who are nowadays not even known by their names"[25]. Where the Romans had Virgil and the French at least Corneille and Racine, the Germans should be content with Johann von Besser (1654-1729), Benjamin Neukirch (1665-1729) and Johann Pietsch (1690-1733). Those three examples, which Gottsched had tried to elevate to the status of national poets, were already forgotten *Hofpoeten* (poets laureaten) of Frederick I of Prussia (1657-1713). There was previous literature in German language, but its quality had been too low for Schlegel's standards to deserve the name of Golden Age.

From Schlegel's perspective, the start of German cultural life had been postponed. When Schlegel opened the memory box of Golden Age in 1800, its content was filled with bitterness and envy for the other European nations. Political theorist Marshall Berman has explained the rise of German Romanticism as an expression of underdeveloped identity:

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23 "Wie relativ überhaupt der Begriff eines goldenen Zeitalters, wenigstens in Rücksicht auf unsre Literatur, wie geneigt man sei, es nur immer rückwärts zu verlegen, das kann das Beispiel eines Schriftstellers … bestätigen, der wirklich so urteilte. Gottsched verlegt in einem seiner Gedichte diese glückliche goldne [sic] Zeit bis in die Epoche Friedrichs, des ersten Königs von Preußen. Die Schriftsteller, welche er als die klassischen in dieser Zeit preist, die also für die deutsche Literatur ungefähr das sein sollten, was Virgil für die römische, Corneille und Racine für die französische waren, sind vorzüglich Besser, Neukirch und Pietsch." KFSA VI, p. 376. English translation by Asko Nivala.

24 On Gottsched's poetics see especially Beiser 2009, pp. 72-100.

25 "Diese ‚jetzt nicht einmal dem Namen nach bekannten' Dichter" KFSA VI, p. 376. English translation by Asko Nivala.

> German intellectuals in Goethe's age were the first to see their society this way when they compared it with England, with France, with expanding America. This "underdeveloped" identity was sometimes a source of shame, at other times (as in German romantic conservatism) a source of pride, most often a volatile mixture of both.[26]

It is not a coincidence that the dialectic philosophy of German Idealism was also invented in early nineteenth-century Germany; it enabled the intellectuals to seek for a synthesis between the contradictory needs of conserving the past and creating the future. For Schlegel this underdevelopment was mostly felt in the field of literature. On the other hand, this situation was also a source of dry humour for him. The former eighteenth-century theories of German Golden Age appeared as something ridiculous at the turn of nineteenth century.

In spite of the fact that Schlegel was living during the *Goethezeit* (Goethe's time) at the turn of the nineteenth century when the German literary culture was actually on the rise, he could not have known that his own present age was the era that would have great influence on all surrounding European nations. One has to remember that even Goethe's status as the most important author of his time had not yet been established in the year 1800. Actually, Schlegel ended *Dialogue on Poetry* with an essay about Goethe's vocation as *the* German poet. There, he provided reasons why Goethe must be considered as significant a modern author as Cervantes, Shakespeare, or Dante had been for other European nations.[27] In other words, Schlegel was among the first critics and literary historians who made a conscious effort in order to elevate Goethe to the Western canon of literature.

It is remarkable how aware Schlegel seemed to be of the change of meaning in the *topos* Golden Age when it was displaced from Greece to Rome and from there to modern age. He thought that Rome was "a prefiguration" (*Vorbedeutung*) of Renaissance, for the Romans were the first people who had to embrace Greek mythology as the compulsory basis for their own poetry.[28] Schlegel even tracked this cultural transfer geographically to the Roman occupation of Greek colonies in Magna Graecia, southern Italy.[29] The Greek

26 BERMAN, 1988, p. 43.
27 See KFSA II, p. 347.
28 KFSA II, p. 295.
29 "Auch durch diese Kenntnisse, nicht durch ihre Literatur allein, als Rhetoren und Sprachlehrer, aber auch als Künstler, Mathematiker und Ärzte, empfahlen sich die Griechen den Römern, als diese nach der Eroberung von Tarent, des untern Italiens

inhabitants of Magna Graecia and their role in Roman cultural history is a perfect example of "a third area of 'mixed' zones … where the 'cohabitation' of different cultures creates something new, a 'third' thing."[30] The Roman identity was a hybrid identity from the beginning. It was based on the displacement of the Greek myth of Golden Age to Augustan era.

French philosopher Rémi Brague has condensed the position of the Romans in Western cultural history as follows: "The situation of secondarity in relation to a previous culture … constitutes what I call 'Romanity.'"[31] In this sense all we Europeans are like Romans: we feel that our obligation is to foster Greek tradition. In other words, all European nations have hybrid identities because our culture is based on cultural transfer from Greece to Rome. According to Schlegel, the Augustan Golden Age of literature (and its countless European imitations and variations since Renaissance) made the cultural transfer with the ancient Greeks to an obsession for all Western countries. Therefore Schlegel claimed: "Henceforth, no nation wanted to remain without its Golden Age."[32] The Golden Age of literature was deeply needed in order to authenticate and legitimate the German-speaking zone as a cultural area equal to Italy, Spain, England and France. Obviously Hesiod had not connected the *topos* with that kind of modern notion of national culture and national literature. For Schlegel in 1800, Golden Age was not something referring to a past stage of childlike innocence. Planning a national Golden Age implied a conscious collective project that could also result in failure.

The Augustan Golden Age as a memory box

Hence, I conclude that both Virgil and Schlegel used the *topos* of Golden Age in a significantly different way compared with its first occurrence in Hesiod. Although some characteristics of the *topos* had to stay relatively stable in order

und Siziliens, in die griechische Welt eingetreten waren, und wurden bald den Siegern unentbehrlich, so sehr diese sich anfangs der unvermeidlichen Einwirkung entgegensetzten. […] Nach der Eroberung des südlichen Italiens und Siziliens, deren Landessprache damals größtenteils noch die griechische war […] musste die Kenntnis dieser allgemeinen Sprache den Römern immer notwendiger werden[.]" KFSA VI, pp. 64f. Confere CESERANI, 2012. I owe this point to Dr. Janne Tunturi.

30 ROECK, 2007, p. 7.

31 BRAGUE, 2002 (1992), p. 43.

32 KFSA II, p. 295.

for people to be able to identify that Virgil and Schlegel were even still talking about the same *topos* as Hesiod, it also appears that every reference to this memory box in different historical situation added a new layer of meaning into it.

For Schlegel, the *topos* of Golden Age no longer referred to the original state of innocence before the inauguration of physical labour, but he was longing for the Golden Age of national poetry that was a meaning not yet present in Hesiod's version of the myth. However, what is common to both Hesiod and Schlegel is that the plot of Golden Age myth was a story of degeneration from generation to generation. For Hesiod the moral nature of mankind degenerated when the Iron Race replaced the Golden Race of man, while for Schlegel, modern literature degenerates when it is diluted to the mere mechanical classical imitation of Roman literature. Classicism appeared as an alienated style, for it did not even imitate the original Greek literature but was a modern imitation of a Roman imitation of Greece.

While the intention of Hesiod's myth was to legitimate agricultural labour as a social institution, Schlegel harnessed this *topos* to create a cultural programme for the non-existing German state. He opened up the memory box of Golden Age for his purposes; however, by doing so he also added something belonging to his own age. Virgil had already retold and overwrote Hesiod's myth, but Schlegel added a new layer as well: namely the problematic related to the formation of modern nineteenth-century nation. Therefore, not only the Golden Age *topos* was displaced from Greek antiquity to nineteenth-century Germany, but the very content of this memory box itself was a cultural transfer according to Schlegel. Of course, nineteenth-century scholars did not use our terminology to refer to this concept, but the twenty-first century scholars are not alone in having understood the basic fact of previous cultures affect those following. The memory box of Golden Age was inherited from the antiquity to nineteenth century, but every generation has filled it with new meanings.

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