

“Romantische Poesie, Naturphilosophie, Konstruktion der Geschichte”: K. O. Müller’s Understanding of History and Myth¹

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The work of K. O. Müller stands as a witness to the transformation in the study of history and myth in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Critical opinion has been unanimous concerning the range and depth of his knowledge of antiquity, but markedly divided on the meaning of his achievements. To some, who celebrate his defense of the historical approach against Fr. Creuzer’s *Symbolik und Mythologie* (1810-1812; 1819-1821), Müller embodies the breakthrough of modern methods in classical studies. As W. Burkert observed:

“Durch die Wirkung Herders und dann der Romantik wuchs das Interesse für das Geheimnisvolle und Uralte der Volkstraditionen, wuchs freilich auch die kritisch-historische Wissenschaft; und es ist kein Zufall, dass gerade auf dem Gebiet der Mythologie rationale Wissenschaft und romantisch-theologische Spekulation aneinandergerieten: im Streit um Creuzers ‘Symbolik’ traten dem alten Aufklärer Johann Heinrich Voss die jungen Wissenschaftler Christian

¹ This article forms a diptych with J. H. Blok, “Quests for a Scientific Mythology. F. Creuzer and K. O. Müller on History and Myth”, in: *Proof and Persuasion in History* [History and Theory, Theme Issue 33 (1994)] eds. A. Grafton and S. Marchand, 26-52. I am deeply indebted to the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University for granting me a Fellowship which enabled me to finish this work; and to all participants in the Davis Center Colloquium “Standards of Proof and Methods of Persuasion in the Discipline of History” (January 1993); in the Davis Center Archeology Colloquium (April 1994); and to all other contributors to this volume during the conference on “K. O. Müller: Leben – Leistung – Wirkung” in Bad Homburg (March 1994), for stimulating criticism. In particular I want to express my gratitude to Stephen Larsen for sharing Creuzeriana, to F. R. Ankersmit for his comments on historical hermeneutics and Kant, to Suzanne Marchand and H. S. Versnel for overall discussion, to Sue Marchand and Stefan Radt for keeping an eye on my English and German respectively (all remaining errors are mine), and to Peter Mason for translating some parts of this account, published in Josine H. Blok, *The Early Amazons. Modern and Ancient Perspectives on a Persistent Myth* (Leiden 1995).

Abbreviations:

For quotations from the works of Karl Otfried Müller see the list of abbreviations in this volume.

EMB
GGA
PH

E. Müller’s biographical sketch in *KDS*.

Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen.

H. Flashar / K. Gründer / A. Horstmann (eds.), *Philologie und Hermeneutik im 19. Jahrhundert. Zur Geschichte und Methodologie der Geisteswissenschaften* (Göttingen 1979).

August Lobeck und Carl Otfried Müller zur Seite, und ihnen gehörte die Zukunft ..."²

While Burkert regrets this depreciation of speculative thought which paved the way for tenacious positivism in the field of classics, he situates Müller squarely on the side of rational "Wissenschaft" which he defines in opposition to Romanticism. A. D. Momigliano has even argued that Müller's achievement defied any connection with Romanticism.³ Yet the future ceased to be Müller's after the middle of the nineteenth century, as the majority of his work failed to comply with the mainstream of academic classicism.⁴ By the 1930's, the two-volume *Die Dorier* (1824), one of Müller's less accomplished works,⁵ was even claimed as a prelude to *Blut-und-Boden* ideology, cut off from its context to serve right-wing political assumptions rather than to revive interest in Müller's ideas.⁶ The resulting antipathy towards Müller's writing among liberal-minded scholars in the following decades is understandable enough,⁷ even if by now it seems to be

² W. Burkert, "Griechische Mythologie und die Geistesgeschichte der Moderne", in: O. Reverdin and B. Grange (eds.), *Les études classiques aux XIXe et XXe siècles: leur place dans l'histoire des idées* [Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique 26, Fondation Hardt] (Vandoeuvres / Geneva 1980) 159-207, here 162-163. Cf. R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship, 1300-1850* (Oxford 1976) 187; Pfeiffer believes Creuzer's *Symbolik* to be the most trenchant statement of opposition to the historicizing approach to mythology, represented foremost by Müller.

³ It will become clear, though, that this judgment cannot be sustained. A. D. Momigliano, "A Return to Eighteenth-Century 'Etruscheria': K. O. Müller", in: A. D. Momigliano, *Studies on Modern Scholarship*, eds. G. W. Bowersock and T. J. Cornell (Berkeley / Los Angeles 1994) 303-314, here 302-303 (orig. Italian 1985).

⁴ On the impact of Müller's work on Jane Harrison (1850-1928), see R. Schlesier, "Prolegomena to Jane Harrison's Interpretation of Ancient Greek Religion", in: W. M. Calder III (ed.), *The Cambridge Ritualists Reconsidered* [Illinois Classical Studies, Suppl. 2; Illinois Studies in the History of Classical Scholarship, vol. 1] (Atlanta 1991) 185-226. Harrison's response shows that she grasped both the historicizing and the ahistorical aspects of Müller's thought. The position of the Cambridge ritualists, and of Harrison in particular, is not just the exception that proves the rule, but the kind of phenomenon that clarifies the rule.

⁵ *Die Dorier*, in two volumes, were the second part of the *Geschichten Hellenischer Stämme und Städte*, the first being *Orchomenos und die Minyer* (1820). Initially, Müller wanted to cover the whole of Greece in this way, but he broke off the project after *Die Dorier*. He intended to return to his plan to write a full history of Greece based on local histories after his travel to Greece, but was prevented from doing so by his death in Athens in 1840. Cf. H. J. Gehrke, "Karl Otfried Müller und das Land der Griechen", *AM* 106 (1991) 9-35. On Müller's later dissatisfaction with *Orchomenos* and *Die Dorier*, see *AW-Br.* 200, to A. Schöll, 11 June 1833; his relief that both books were nearly sold out, and his wish not to reissue them, *G-Br.* no. 230 (3 Jan. 1839) from his publisher J. Max; his reply *G-Br.* no. 231 (4 March 1839). *G-Br.* no. 74 from W. J. Hamilton (1805-1867) to Müller (15 July 1827) and comm. *G-Br.* 2.55-56; Hamilton, an English geographer and former student of Müller's, had suggested to Müller to have *Orchomenos* translated, which Müller did not want to do without substantial revisions. He did make revisions in the English translation of the *Dorier*, *The History and Antiquities of the Doric Race*, transl. H. Tufnell and G. C. Lewis (London 1830) 2 vols., but apparently did not like the result either. He insisted time and again that he would do the whole enterprise anew after his travel to Greece; cf. Gehrke, *ibid.* 28ff.

⁶ Cf. the contribution of V. Losemann to this volume.

⁷ Müller's assumptions on ethnic difference impress modern readers as a mild case of a pernicious and ominous disease. It is clear that Müller valued the Greeks as superior to every other people, but there are some important differences between his position and the later,

counter-balanced by the assessment of his "Wissenschaft" just mentioned. All the same, it will not do to split Müller's work in a scientific and acceptable, and a Romantic and questionable part. Such a device bars our understanding of Müller's historical significance and of the features that account for the renewed interest in his work today.

The fractured reflections on Müller's work may find a unifying focus if we recognize 'modernity' in the study of history to be a multifaceted impulse, and Müller as a scholar who tried, as one of the first in his field, to infuse it into the current practices of classical philology. While his views belonged as much to the "romantisch-theologische Spekulation" as to the "rationale Wissenschaft", he attempted to merge the two patterns of thought and could perceive scholarship as satisfactory only when it consisted of both. We may ask how far he succeeded in this project, and indeed how far he could ever succeed. His contemporaries recognized the uniqueness of his qualities, but they seemed more astonished than convinced. G. Pflug has pointed out that Müller's *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie* (1825) found more opposition from the "wissenschaftliche" critics than from the Romantic side.⁸ This response anticipated the shift of perspective that in the course of the nineteenth century would both transform Müller's ideas beyond recognition and allow the recurrent invocation of his name as a means to promote a wider approach to classical studies.

Focusing on Müller's life and work up to 1825 when he published the *Prolegomena*, I want to explore Müller's views as his individual response to the debates of his days. His Protestant upbringing merged with Romanticism to form a nucleus of ideas which defined his encounter with "rationale Wissenschaft". Creuzer's work was a major factor in his creation of a framework for the historical study of myth, precisely since to Müller's mind this field could not do without speculation.

destructive variety. First, Müller did not argue for an essential difference in race, but for cultural diversity, reinforced by historical developments. In fact, in his ideas on the origins of culture (see below) he assumed all people to be endowed with identical mental equipment; it is in the application of this equipment that cultures would develop their distinctive authenticity. At times he also evaluated cultures as different in a sense that implied their inequality, at times not at all; his ideas appear to be inconsistent on this matter. Second, he did not identify the Germans with the Greeks, even if he thought that German scholarship had achieved most in historical understanding of the Greeks (see also below). He shared several strikingly contradictory opinions with his Romantic contemporaries: for instance, he valued the Greeks in particular as the embodiment of freedom, while adhering to a conservative position with regard to German society.

⁸ G. Pflug, "Methodik und Hermeneutik bei Karl Otfried Müller", in: *PH* 122-140, 134. Cf. M. M. Sassi, "Ermeneutica del mito in K. O. Müller", *AnnPisa* s. III, 14.3 (1984) 911-936; K. Nickau, "Karl Otfried Müller, Professor der Klassischen Philologie 1819-1840", in: C. J. Classen (ed.), *Die Klassische Altertumswissenschaft an der Georg-August-Universität Göttingen. Eine Ringvorlesung zu ihrer Geschichte* (Göttingen 1989) 27-50; Müller's writing is discussed in detail in other contributions to this volume.

“Sinne und Seele”: the formation of Müller’s views

Karl Otfried Müller was born in 1797 as the first child of Pastor Karl Daniel Müller, and baptized as Karl. Two brothers, Julius and Eduard, and a sister, Gottliebe, completed the family circle. Karl did not attend school until he was nine years old, but was educated by his father.⁹ His youth at home also kept him close to his mother, who continued to be of great importance to him.¹⁰ The letters he was to write to his parents throughout his life testify to a remarkably deep attachment to his family and home. The Müllers lived in Brieg in Silesia until they moved to nearby Ohlau in 1809. In these years and in these surroundings (Karl attended the Gymnasium in Brieg from 1806 to 1814), Pietist Protestantism exerted the most pervasive influence on the young Müller’s mental development.

Since the seventeenth century, Pietists felt they kept the true spirit of Luther alive against the adaptations forged by political strife and authoritarianism. Salvation depended on faith alone, and faith was sparked by reading the Bible, translated into German by Luther himself. The admonitions of the Scriptures, added to the harshness of life in the German countries, often created gloomy sobriety, but, accustomed to looking inward to find revelation, the Pietists were also inclined to self-sufficiency and mysticism. The writings of the German mystic Jacob Böhme (1575-1624) reviving Paul’s dictum: “Der Buchstabe tödtet, aber der Geist macht lebendig” (2 Kor. 3:6) acquired great significance in the two centuries after Böhme’s death. Relying on *Geist* as man’s true communication with God, Pietists advocated strict morality, absolute freedom of conscience and separation of church and state. On the other hand, the same assumption discouraged interest in the mundane actualities of politics as such, turning Pietism into a pragmatic conservatism as long as its vital beliefs were not threatened. In the second half of the eighteenth century, however, German Pietist circles contributed in significant ways to European philosophical dispute. Many of the leading German philosophers were raised as Pietists, and introduced into the debates on the authority and autonomy of Enlightened reason their characteristic insistence on the fundamental and divine nature of *Geist*.

Several interlocking developments fueled this response. Reason, the principle which accounted for astonishing results in the sciences, insisted that a scientific foundation of belief was impossible. Empiricist critiques had demonstrated that the assumption that God had created the rational mind in actual congruence with nature was untenable. Man thus was cut off from the world and the world was emptied of God. More poignantly, the

⁹ EMB x.

¹⁰ Unto now, I have not been able to find more particulars on his mother, whose family name was Linke. Her first name may have been Julie, as their second son was called Julius and Karl’s eldest daughter was called Julie.

sciences and textual criticism had shown convincingly that the extant Scriptures could not be God's unmediated word; they documented a specific historical and linguistic moment of God's presence. As a result, the prevailing dominance of reason now asked for a *salto mortale*:¹¹ if the understanding of man's religiosity and feelings was beyond reason, a mere matter of subjectivity and belief, then that was precisely what mattered most. It was faith itself, the human soul, that was the true origin of human existence. If J. G. Hamann (1730-1788), the spirit infusing the *Sturm und Drang*, pointed once more to the Bible as the source of all truth, he did so in a new, though idiosyncratic¹² way. It was God's presence behind the text that was divine, just as the divine spirit of every human conditioned his communication with the world. The Pietist philosopher F. H. Jacobi (1743-1819) turned the problematic legacy of Spinozist pantheism into an argument for an unconditional belief in divine presence and individual existence: "Gott ist ausser mir, ein lebendiges, für sich bestehendes Wesen, oder Ich bin Gott".¹³ Thus Jacobi shared the criticism of Hamann, J. G. Herder (1744-1803) and J. G. Fichte (1762-1814) on the epistemology of Imm. Kant (1724-1804). Knowledge of man, and even of man's knowledge, would not emerge from analysis of his ratio, but from understanding the drives in his body and soul. Reason was to guide man's arguments, but could never supplant his faith.

Müller's father must have been familiar with these debates, for they had been raging when he studied theology and were taking new turns at the time he educated his children. Though Müller appears to have been blessed with an amiable, sunny disposition and exhibited none of the melancholia which afflicted so many Protestants of his day, his letters show all the fundamental principles of the Pietist worldview. A quiet piety in which the Bible has ceased to take a prominent place; a sober attitude in worldly life, wary of excess or immorality; a distance from politics with the inevitable tendency towards conservatism, though he ardently opposed any obstruction of freedom of conscience and expression.¹⁴ These were his fundamental

¹¹ For the term "*salto mortale*", F. C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason. German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass. / London 1987; 1993), in particular ch. 2, "Jacobi and the Pantheism Controversy".

¹² For a recent discussion of Hamann's thought and its impact, see I. Berlin, *The Magus of the North. J. G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism* (New York 1993).

¹³ Quoted in R. Safranski, *Schopenhauer und die wilden Jahre der Philosophie. Eine Biographie* (Munich / Vienna 1987) 103.

¹⁴ He did not take part in dancing (*Lebensbild* no. 17, Jan. 1816); was moderate with alcohol, even in his studentyears (*Lebensbild* no. 11, Oct. 1814); throughout in his letters, he seems to feel obliged to tell his parents why he is drinking at all. A fancy for worldly goods would eventually prove too strong, when he decided to build an extremely beautiful and expensive house. More significantly, his moral strictness would eventually make him argue against some of his scientific principles, by his inability to connect Greek culture with sexual abandonment; cf. the other half of my diptych, *supra* n. 1. The activities of the *Burschenschaften* in Breslau when he was majoring in classics (1814-1816) appalled him so deeply, that the modest interest in politics he may have had (he partook in some opposition, *Lebensbild* no. 14, Dec. 1814; no. 17, Jan. 1816), turned into a wariness of any political

principles. More importantly,¹⁵ the vital significance of religious feelings in any creation of man would inform his views on culture. He was fully aware of this legacy when he explained to his father in 1819 why he sided with L. Tieck (1773-1853) against J. W. Goethe (1749-1832) in the conviction that all true art depends on religious inspiration:

“Doch ich verliere mich in diese Lieblingsmaterie, die mir als Mythologen und Archäologen (so Gott will!) natürlich sehr am Herzen liegt. Es sind dies Ansichten, die in der Geschichte der Kunst selbst liegen, und mir keineswegs durch die Romantik eingepflicht sind, und die auch gewiss Deinem Gemüthe, mein innig verehrter Vater, am meisten zusagen.”¹⁶

The Pietist mixture of reverence for the divine presence in the world and self-conscious introspection conditioned Müller's reception of Romantic views and became the foundation underlying his scholarship. This self-consciousness could take the form of a rational self-inquiry; its main impetus, however, was reliance on an intuition of what is meaningful, fuelled by an emotional yearning. In a letter to Tieck he explained:

“Eigentlich liebe ich nicht zu reflektiren, was ich getan und was ich thun soll, sondern überlasse mich dem innern Triebe, den ich für den Leiter meines Daseins halte.”¹⁷

Like his Romantic contemporaries, he found in nature the immediate relationship between the whole and the particular, a simultaneous sense of being oneself by being in touch with the other. His brother described how throughout his life Müller was fond of long wanderings in the countryside, to immerse himself in

“Anschauung ... lebensvoller Natur-Gebilde”; “Bedeutsamkeit des Eigenthümlichen”; “die Ahnung eines geheimnißvollen Zusammenhanges des Geistes- und des Naturlebens”; “der eigenthümlichen geistigen Physiognomie

activism; cf. *Lebensbild* no. 9, April 1814; no. 13, Nov. 1814. His disgust of Prussian militarism and tyranny by the police (*Lebensbild* no. 15, May 1815; no. 40 [17 Dec. 1819] 60-61); his rejection of any form of censure (*Lebensbild* no. 40 [17 Dec. 1819] 61).

¹⁵ I.e. more importantly with regard to the subject of this article. Concerning politics, the protest against the reactionary government of Hanover and subsequent dismissal of the “Göttinger Seven” in 1837, among whom the brothers Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859) were his close friends, deeply disturbed Müller's peace of mind. Müller, who objected to despotism and believed in the constitutional autonomy of the University, sympathized with the ideas of the Seven, but disagreed with the political means they had chosen. Not having signed the declaration of the Seven, he nevertheless drew up a protest against their dismissal with five colleagues, disregarded the decree against support of them and helped to create a fund to assist them financially. On the risks taken by the Seven, the Six and their supporters, see F. Ranke, “C. O. Müller, ein Lebensbild”, *Programm der königlichen Realschule* (Berlin 1870), and the lively account in a letter (15 Dec. 1837) by J. J. Bachofen, who was at Göttingen at the time, of the “Lebehoch” by students for the protesting professors and the threat of dismissal of the Six as well. K. O. Müller is mentioned explicitly in both contexts. J. J. Bachofen, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10, *Briefe*, ed. F. Husner (Basel 1967) 8-10 (I owe this reference to Suzanne Marchand).

¹⁶ *Lebensbild* no. 40 (17 Dec. 1819) 59. Cf. *EMB* xl, note.

¹⁷ Müller to L. Tieck, *G-Br.* no. 27 (26 Nov. 1821) 41.

einer Gegend, einer Landschaft und der mächtigen Einwirkung derselben auf den sich mit Geist und Gemüth ganz in sie versenkenden Menschen"; "Heimathsgefühl"; "der frommen Anhänglichkeit an alles Gewohnte, Vertraute, von der Natur selbst uns Zugewiesene, seine Sinne und seine Seele".¹⁸

As he felt the landscape around Ohlau as himself "von der Natur selbst zugewiesen", the experience of nature he held to be the origin of knowing "Sinne und Seele" for every individual and people. When in the closing pages of the *Prolegomena* he put his own contribution in the perspective of criticism that was sure to follow, he compared the emotional gratification of scholarship with wandering in a forest, feeling the limitation of his individuality in the sublimity of *Wissenschaft*:

"Aber mehr noch [than agreement with others, J.H.B] wird jene Ruhe und Zuversicht hergestellt durch das eigne die Untersuchung begleitende Gefühl, immer neue Stege und lichte Plätze in der chaotischen Verwirrung der überlieferten Mythenmasse zu finden. Es ist dies Gefühl in den bessern Stunden des Lebens in Wahrheit kein egoistisches; die Wissenschaft ist zu groß und umfassend, als daß sie dem einzelnen Bearbeiter allgemeinen Ruhm verspräche ..."¹⁹

If the character of Müller's pious Romanticism seems anything but exceptional, what is exceptional is its formative effect on his scholarship. The interlocking of Pietism and *Naturanschauung* was the foundation of his own sense of self, and likewise of what he held the origin of all human culture to be. Feeling was the vital element, blending religion and *Naturanschauung* into the understanding of self and others. As the mind itself was a fusion of creativity, religiosity, and self-consciousness, the encounter between the mind and nature resulted in a spiritual sense of locality and cultural authenticity. When we trace Müller's reaction to his formal education, his selection and elaboration of subjects, and the shaping of his position in historical and mythical hermeneutics, his convictions appear clear from the outset. In a way, they only grew stronger over the years, although he tried to get a firmer hold on his inclination to surrender his ratio to his emotions, learned to take the demands of scholarship into account, and certainly profited from insights of others. Yet he only changed his views marginally, basically relying (in the words of his brother) on his feeling of a

"tiefe Naturgrund des geistigen Lebens der Menschheit, das Unbewußte und Nothwendige in seinem Wirken und Walten, dessen verborgene Gesetzmäßigkeit" and a "tiefer Sinn für den Reiz des Individuellen".²⁰

Müller found nature both exciting and calming in a variety of ways. He showed some skill in drawing, a talent which enabled him to render in his

¹⁸ *EMB* xxiv.

¹⁹ Müller, *Prolegomena* 345.

²⁰ *EMB* xxxiii; xxxiv.

own creations his sensitivity to forms as outward expressions of inner life. He held the visual arts to be based on a fusion between the mind, the body and feeling, and he valued the physicality of the senses and of the mind engendered by his contact with nature. Physical intimacy with the landscape, the arts and other material aspects he found to be indispensable for true historical understanding.²¹ More significantly, his dedication to the visual arts seems to spring from the unusual, almost uncanny power of his mind's eye. This quality not only reflects the Romantic propensity for the visual, which in the field of the humanities was transposed into the idea of "wirklich Schauen". It also undoubtedly reflects something central to his own nature, an imaginative component exemplified in a detailed visualization of the Greek landscape before he had seen it in reality.²²

Yet language was the privileged medium to convey whatever one felt or thought. At first Müller's susceptibility to the physical aspect of the mind made him look for the same qualities in language as in the visual arts. In his early years of study, he was interested in phonetics because here language merged the body with the mind.²³ But gradually he became convinced that language possessed a quality of its own, implying a different relationship to physical existence. He fed his pious imagination and linguistic versatility by reading Schiller, Klopstock, Jean Paul, Tieck, Novalis, Uhland, and Rückert.²⁴ Trying, not very successfully, to write poetry of his own, he wondered if historiography could ever attain the immediacy of poetry. Once he even wanted to bring the first closer to the second in attempts to write history in the form of poems and stories in the spirit of Novalis.²⁵ As his early sensitivity to nature turned into a general kind of *Naturphilosophie*, his involvement in German and classical literature gradually developed into comprehensive ideas on the cultural significance of language.

Both at the Gymnasium and when reading classics at Breslau (1814-1816), Müller excelled in his knowledge of the ancient languages, in particular Latin. When he objected to a conjecture in Juvenal made by his teacher L. F. Heindorf (1774-1816) on the grounds that the proposition was at odds with the poetic meter,²⁶ his skills were recognized and encouraged. Yet he soon found himself dissatisfied with the traditional practices of philology. Beside classical philology, Müller enrolled in courses in history (mainly the history of the Middle Ages and Reformation), theology,

²¹ As professor in Göttingen, he gave a *privatissimum* for those who intended to make a tour of ancient and modern art; *G-Br.* 2.46. This sensitivity to the immediacy of the past, in particular experienced through the senses of touch and sight, is now again a subject of interest to philosophers of history, often in response to the work of the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) whose religious views had much in common with Pietism.

²² E.g. the description of Boeotia in *Orchomenos* 22-93; his notebooks of his travel through Greece, cf. the contribution of K. Fittschen to this volume.

²³ *EMB* xxxv.

²⁴ *EMB* xxxix, xl; to Tieck, *G-Br.* no. 27 (26 Nov. 1821).

²⁵ *EMB* xli.

²⁶ *Lebensbild* no. 12 (10 Nov. 1814) 18.

sciences (in particular botany and geography) and whatever seemed interesting to him; in addition, he quickly mastered several languages, among which Italian, Arabic and Hebrew.²⁷ His main interest, however, drew him to philosophy which he preferred even to philology.²⁸

In the courses of H. Steffens (1773-1845) Kant may have been an ingredient, since his writings were a regular part of the German philosophical curriculum. But Steffens' own field was physics, and he offered mainly a self-styled *Naturphilosophie*, underpinned by his connection with Schelling and Schleiermacher (see below) whom he considered as his best friends, by his eloquence, by his patriotic zeal²⁹ and his religious fervour. In his memoirs Steffens recalled his views at the time Müller was his student:

"A Protestant I was with my whole soul, yet I must confess that Protestantism as it existed then seemed to have called forth a conflict which it had not settled. ... Still, I was convinced that religion was not mere speculation, it was not philosophy; this was ideal and subjective; but religion must be objective truth, having the same relation to the soul and its wants that nature had to scientific investigations. Like nature, it was a gift of God, and it must be known and become real to the consciousness."³⁰

These ideas Müller absorbed with mind and soul, confirming his preexisting assumptions in a more systematic shape. While classical philology was liable to kill the *Geist* with the weapon of the *Buchstabe*, Steffens offered Müller a vision of wholeness – organic and alive. A few years later Müller testified to his lasting admiration for Steffens in a letter:

"... ein Mann von eigentlich ergreifender Kraft der Seele und des Worts, der ein wirkliches Schauen an die Stelle aller Schulbegriffe und Distinktionen setze, fehlt hier [*scil.* in Göttingen, J.H.B.] ganz. Wie würde sich Steffens' Genius hier ausnehmen?"³¹

To find "ein wirkliches Schauen" as the foundation of true knowledge was a quest which drew Müller to the heart of contemporary debates. The best guidance he expected to find in Berlin, where the recently founded university (1810) was endowed with outstanding scholars in classical

²⁷ On the courses he took in 1815, *Lebensbild* no. 17 (29 Oct. 1815). Müller's *Nachlass* in the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen contains several notebooks with different subjects from those mentioned to his parents (e.g. Raumer on the Reformation in the letter, on the Middle Ages in the notebooks; Steffens on anthropology in the letter, "Licht, Farben, Wärme" in the notebooks), so neither survey is exhaustive.

²⁸ Letter to his parents, 10 Nov. 1814, quoted in *EMB* xii.

²⁹ Though born in Stavanger, Norway, Steffens had made the German intellectual world and its homelands his own; in 1813, he astonished Breslau university and himself by a powerful speech for the defense of the fatherland and a brief participation in army actions.

³⁰ Henrich Steffens, *The story of my career as student at Freiburg and Jena, and as a Professor at Halle, Breslau and Berlin*, etc. Transl. W. L. Gage (Boston 1863) 281 (orig. *Was ich erlebte*, x vols.).

³¹ To Tieck, *G-Br.* no. 11 (5 Dec. 1819) 13.

studies. And it is not unlikely that Steffens encouraged him to study in the city where Steffens himself longed to get a position and where Müller could profit from Schleiermacher's teaching.

Müller qualified for study in Berlin with an essay on Numa Pompilius, based on early Roman "Nationalpoesie".³² His choice of a Roman topic was inspired by his reading of B. G. Niebuhr's (1776-1831) *Römische Geschichte* (1811-) and his own excellence in Latin.³³ He must have admired the scope of Niebuhr's perspective and his impressive source criticism; Niebuhr's aim to distill historical knowledge out of mythical traditions also matched Müller's interests.³⁴ Yet Müller was of a different cast of mind than Niebuhr³⁵ and it seems unlikely that he shared the historiographical priorities of this banker-statesman-historian. Like most German Romantics, Müller was more concerned with (national) culture than with the more practical, rational matters of politics. Even more, perhaps, the essay reflects Müller's interest in poetry, the Romantic preference for the earliest periods when civilization seemed to be at its most spontaneous and authentic. In brief, what Niebuhr had done pertained to what Müller was to call "external history".³⁶ Religion and myth made up the inner side of history. Likewise, in the *Prolegomena* he would make a distinction between the "external" forms of myth, a phenomenology of the same texture as 'regular' history, and the "internal" aspects of myth, springing from a different source.

Müller disliked Berlin as a city, but intellectually he found in these years (1816-1817) much of what he was looking for. Again, classical philology was only part of this contentment, and once more he recognized exactly which views he could really share and the differences with his own convictions. He admired F. A. Wolf (1759-1824) for his outstanding knowledge of Greek, but nevertheless as his brother Eduard recounted

"... fand mein Bruder, ein wie großer Geist Wolf auch sonst war, eben jene umfassende, rein historische, alles Einzelne zu einem fest in sich verbundenen Ganzen zusammenfügende Auffassung des Alterthums, zu der ihn nun einmal sein innerstes Streben hindrängte, bei Wolf doch nicht, in seinen Vorlesungen damals wohl noch weniger als in seinen Schriften ..."³⁷

³² *EMB* xvii.

³³ In general, Müller's interests drew him more to Greek topics than to Roman ones, as his more extensive publications make fully clear. Yet to prove that he was a good classicist, he had to prove himself a capable philologist. This he did in Latin, the ancient language he had mastered best, exemplified by his prize essay on Numa and his editions of Festus and Varro.

³⁴ Cf. Pflug, "Methodik und Hermeneutik" (*supra* n. 8) 127-128. See also the contribution of G. Walther to this volume.

³⁵ *EMB* xix-xx.

³⁶ "... und hat den Volksstamm der Dorier zum Gegenstande, wovon das vor Ihnen liegende die erste Abtheilung ist, die äußere Geschichte bis zum Peloponnesischen Kriege, und dann Religion und Mythos in sich begreift; die zweite behandelt den Staat und das Privat-Leben, die Bildung und Kunst des Volkes." Müller to L. Tieck, *G-Br.* no. 41 (10 July 1823).

³⁷ *EMB* xx.

This lack added to Wolf's unpleasant character, Müller felt his interests more satisfied in the philosophical teaching of K. W. F. Solger (1780-1819). But Solger focused on mythology and "Götterlehre" in its final stages as systems and their esthetic representations, while Müller looked for historical origins, the development of religious feeling and cults, their specific qualities defined by local, natural surroundings.³⁸ Again, he could agree with much of Ph. Buttmann's (1764-1829) work on myth, since

"ihm besonders verdankt man es, daß das Mythische als wesentlich verschieden von dem Historischen anerkannt ... ist."³⁹

But his disagreement with Buttmann's assumptions of a very ancient exchange between Greece and the Orient, which the elder philologist had tried to show with extensive etymologies, continued right into the first pages of Müller's thesis, elaborated into *Aegneticorum liber* (1817) (see below) and its defense.⁴⁰ He later explained in his comment on Buttmann, that

"... ich die Ueberzeugung hege, daß die Sagen größtentheils auf sehr beschränktem Boden entstanden, und zunächst durch Wanderungen, dann durch die Poësie (die überhaupt das erste allgemein Hellenische ward) allgemeiner geworden sind."⁴¹

As his discussion with Buttmann indicates, Müller grew increasingly confident in his assertion that culture had its origin in the religious *Geist* of mankind. To understand a culture, one had to understand its language not by relying on the *Schulbegriff* and *Distinktionen* of traditional philology, but by grasping its cultural significance. His views on language were strengthened by A. Böckh (1785-1867), whom he valued most of all his teachers in classics. The debate between Böckh and G. Hermann (1772-1848), often erroneously summarized as a choice between 'Sach-Philologie' and 'Sprach-Philologie', might be better understood as a discussion on the meaning of language.⁴² To Hermann, language was ultimately a transparent medium through which the *Realien* of antiquity could be perceived. Böckh believed that language sprang from the innate capacities of a people and developed into a cultural system, 'Sache', in its own right. As we shall see, the debate reflects some differences between Kantianism and the position of those who criticized Kant's views on the transcendental qualities of language.

Müller absorbed many of Böckh's views, fusing them with his own assumptions. Language designated the same cultural, spiritual authenticity

³⁸ *EMB* xxii.

³⁹ Müller in *Prolegomena* 329.

⁴⁰ *EMB* xxi.

⁴¹ *Prolegomena* 331.

⁴² E. Vogt, "Der Methodenstreit zwischen Hermann und Böckh", in: *PH* 102-121; cf. the contribution of G. W. Most to this volume.

which formed the kernel of a people's identity, while linguistic change over time clarified external, historical experiences. A few years later, he pointed out to A. Schöll (1805-1882), a student from Tübingen who would become his lifelong friend:

“Sie haben Lust und Liebe zur Kenntniß des Hellenischen Alterthums; Sie haben ... sich ... den Sinn für dasselbe geläutert, viel historische Anschauung gewonnen, eine unbefangene, dem Gegenstande sich anschmiegende, Betrachtungsweise erworben. Werfen Sie sich nun mit ganzer Seele hinein ... Dazu gehört nun aber für's erste, und zwar ganz besonders, das Studium der Sprache, welche ja *nicht blos, wie viele immer sagen, die Pforte zur Kenntniß des alten Lebens ist, sondern an sich schon die lauterste Quelle dieser Kenntniß* ...”⁴³

Yet in Böckh's work Müller missed his own deep concern with religiosity and individuality, the inner forces of mankind from which culture would spring. In his Breslau years, his wish to understand this core had turned him to philosophy in the shape of *Naturphilosophie*. But now philosophy itself was turning increasingly to history as the field where the search for the human mind could be carried out with most promise of true understanding.

This philosophical objective in historical understanding acquired its innovative intensity in its struggle with Kant. Kant posited a fundamental distinction between the human mind and the world it set out to comprehend. Indeed, the ways one could understand the world depended entirely on the categories of understanding active in the human mind. Thus if the world seemed a macrocosm of the mind, this was precisely because the mind had created it to appear as such. Kant's principles refuted the Cartesian rationalism (which held that the creation of knowledge presupposed an essential correspondence of mind and world) underlying the Enlightenment. His system was generally greeted as a revolutionary analysis of human knowledge and as a new basis for scientific discourse, in particular because of its axiom that the human mind is basically self-reliant in creating knowledge out of experience. Owing large debts to the Pietist tradition in which Kant himself had been raised and to philosophical debates in the preceding decades, Kant's philosophy reflected the increasing interest in the creativity and autonomy of the human mind.

For the very same reasons, as mentioned briefly above, several German contemporaries found themselves dissatisfied with Kant after their initial enthusiasm for his works. Kant's discussion of the categories and of the kind of knowledge each would yield, could not but emphasize the rationality and order of the mind and hence of the comprehended world. Whatever lay beyond this kind of insight could not be part of real knowledge. Nevertheless, it was obvious that many phenomena of this

⁴³ Müller to A. Schöll, *AW-Br.* no. 40 (Fall 1825) 57-58 (emphasis added).

quality existed, and even that they were vitally important to people's perception of the world and themselves. Religion in particular, but also metaphysics in general had to be reassessed if Kantian principles were adhered to. Kant himself saw the necessity to account for these aspects of life within his system. After the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Riga 1781) he continued to elaborate his thought on ethical problems, and on metaphysics in general in the *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können* (Riga 1783). Yet Hamann, Jacobi, Herder, Fichte and others felt that Kant's notions of the mind failed to deal with the far more significant, non-rational aspects of human experience. To them, Kant's enterprise was ingenious but basically misdirected. Moreover, Kant's philosophy failed to offer sustenance to those impressed by the particularity of historical phenomena.

A new historical consciousness had emerged quite suddenly after the 1750's, and grew to be the foundation of the discipline of history about a century later. In the years of this gradual transition, various points of view competed in defining the subject matter of history and the methodology it required to attain satisfactory results. The basic feature marking the distinction between this new approach and the preceding interest in other times and places, was the acceptance of a fundamental difference between the present and the past. This perception of difference was the very feature which made history an excitingly foreign country but also a challenge to modern understanding. The more the notion of ultimate difference between cultures was adhered to, the more pressing the problem of understanding would be. Some sense of unity had to be assumed somewhere, if ever one was to get in touch with the other in terms of time.

The first guise in which the new paradigm manifested itself was the so-called speculative approach to history. Each historical period was held to have a character of its own, distinguishing it from the preceding and following eras, but an underlying development was assumed to link various stages of human civilization in a universal process. It was based on the concept of the human mind, mediating between the universal laws of nature and the development of human civilization in stages. Difference, then, was accommodated while a sense of unity was maintained, and both were sustained in the progress of the human mind through history. This conception of historical development was initially expounded in the terms of the Enlightenment, and 'mind' identified with 'reason'. It held historical development in stages, roughly distinguished as savagery, barbarism and finally civilization, to be a linear progress, a step by step unfolding of rationality, assessed in political organization on the one hand, and manners or morals on the other. This view was foremost developed in the French and, with a different emphasis, in the Scottish Enlightenment.

Kant's epistemology did not really lend itself to the comprehension of historical phenomena. His categories were universally valid, based on deductive reasoning, and were presumed to provide a foundation for

rigorous distinctions between what is rationally true and what is contingent. In his system, time was as such contingent, a part of experience but merely an element of knowledge as far as the mind could order it. The only way the Kantian principles could be made historical was by conjecturing that Kant's system was the ultimate result of the development of reason. This was exactly what Kant argued, as far as he discussed history at all.⁴⁴ His view of the development of thought focused on the gradual improvement of rational understanding. Thus Kant provided the German version of the Enlightened speculative approach.

If his limitation of knowledge to the domain of reason had not been enough, Kant's understanding of history only invigorated his critics. Looking for the inner drives behind the rational, organized appearances of civilization, they offered a view of history which employed the form of a developmental model but filled it in with entirely different contents. 'Mind' was not reason, but an inner, creative force. Herder emphasized the unity of each culture, its spontaneous autonomy that shaped all cultural expressions into an organic whole, and Fichte pointed out the emotional power of the human will in the creation of history. The most famous philosopher reinforcing the model was to be G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831), who reassessed God's presence in history against Kant's detachment and whose dialectical laws governing the gradual unfolding of the mind inaugurated a new approach in German historical thought. In brief, both the Enlightened and the Romantic speculative systems assumed that the present to which the historian belonged was linked to the past in a continuous, teleological process. Historical understanding could be arrived at by assessment of the developmental laws and thus by rational retrospection.

But this idea would not satisfy for long. The Romantic thrust toward specificity and autonomous diversity continued to radicalize Enlightened views, at last turning them against their original assumptions. In due course, Herder's and Fichte's interest in the specificity of each historical epoch undercut the impact of the developmental paradigm. History increasingly became the field where human activity and thought was to be revealed in its significant diversity, in shapes which were different from each other and from the present and not defined by an overall, formative force. Likewise, the debate on the relationship between language and knowledge took a new turn, now that language could no longer be understood as an index to a teleological process. The variety of languages was one of the arguments which Kant's critics used against his epistemology. How could the Kantian categories operate universally, asked Hamann, when language, in which knowledge is expressed, is a complete, cultural whole of its own?⁴⁵ Herder insisted that man was created with the natural ability to use language, which

⁴⁴ For a full discussion of Kant's ideas in this respect, see Y. Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History* (Princeton 1980).

⁴⁵ Cf. Berlin, *The Magus* (*supra* n. 12) 130.

took shape within specific historical surroundings. In brief, language was not a transparent reflection of the real world, nor a neutral instrument to convey reason. It was an individual, organic entity shaped by history, in which the creative mind of a people expressed itself.

In due course radical historicism⁴⁶ faced new problems, stemming from its very assumptions. Romanticism looked for the authenticity of time, place and individual, but it looked as passionately for unity, "das Ganze" that would give meaning to the particular. In the speculative model, history possessed an a priori unity; a part of a specific stage, indeed the past itself, always reflected the whole. Now that this type of historical unity was being rejected, it became very difficult to create coherence in a past that was defined by difference and change. If there was no innate coherence between then and now, how could one understand the otherness of the past? Historical knowledge thus needed a new foundation; in creating this, F. E. D. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) played a crucial role. Like Herder and Fichte, Schleiermacher had started his career as a Pietist theologian and embraced Kantianism, but then came to renounce the Kantian focus on reason. He saw God's presence in the endowment of man with an empathetic, creative soul. "Nicht der hat Religion, der an eine heilige Schrift glaubt, sondern, welcher keiner bedarf und wohl selbst eine machen könnte." Schleiermacher argued that understanding of the world depended on empathy with other minds in the broadest sense, to underly any rational analysis. History was not an overall development realizing God's creation of mankind, but each culture and period testified to man's God-given capacity to express his specific experience of the divine. In brief, the human soul itself was the only common ground between then and now. To understand the mind of the historical other, one could not just rely on retrospection, but one should rely on a combination of introspection and historical consciousness. The latter idea implied that 'das Ganze' was to be sought in the unity of a specific cultural epoch, based on its own historical traditions. Induction, not deduction, was the way to historical understanding.

Hermeneutics, as this method was labelled, referred by its very name to Hermes, the god of transition from one world into another, a bilingual guide to make the mind of the other comprehensible to one's own. Though Schleiermacher built on the work of others, he was certainly the one who developed hermeneutics as the major method in the formation of radical historicism, by transposing it from the field of literature to that of theology and history. As H.-G. Gadamer has put it: the foundation for the study of

⁴⁶ (Radical) historicism here means the assumption that each historical epoch has to be understood in terms of its own development, indicating the relative uniqueness of each epoch. Hermeneutics, as the texts explain, is the concomitant method of historical understanding. This is an essentially different meaning of the word than the 'historicism' which in particular Karl Popper has critically analysed, a teleological perception of the whole historical process which in this essay is labelled 'the speculative model'.

history (in the way history was conceived in the early nineteenth century) was hermeneutics.⁴⁷ Yet the rejection of the speculative unity of history in favour of the hermeneutic conception left several problems unsolved, which turned up, in due course, in Müller's work. In the aims and methods of reading a text, there seemed to be little difference or no difference at all between the work of a historian and that of a literary critic. And hermeneutics offered no arguments how the fragments of history were to be reconciled with universal history, which was still felt to be the ultimate purpose of historiography.

In sum, it was not only the Romantic striving for wholeness, but also the epistemological problems stemming from the equally Romantic split between I and other, now and then, that called for hermeneutics to solve the paradox of historical understanding. Thus hermeneutics offered an answer to several related problems stemming from the critique of the developmental model. Wholeness had to be shaped by the historian himself, connecting as many aspects of a period as possible. It was his responsibility to create this unity. Since the understanding of the world was dependent on language as the mode of transmittance, hermeneutic comprehension of history was equally concerned with language as the mode of translation of phenomena into knowledge. The hermeneutic approach situated these ideas in a historicist framework: the specificity of time and place were documented in historical texts, which reflected the historical conditions that had produced them.

Schleiermacher's thought stimulated Müller to recognize the kind of problem he was facing. The eternal nature of religious feeling had to be aligned somehow to the temporal, specific framework of history. His own sense of the historical, as shaped by local, cultural individuality, was confirmed and systematized by Schleiermacher's radical historicism. Simultaneously, Schleiermacher's Pietism sustained Müller's conviction that the human mind was inspired by religion. It seems only fitting, both for the philosopher and for Müller, that Schleiermacher taught in the department of theology and did not hold an official position in history or philosophy. The Berlin chair of philosophy was vacant after Fichte's death in 1814, to be occupied in 1818 by Hegel, whose *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807) had immediately attracted attention. Although Hegel in fact dealt with kindred problems, extensively charting the presence of the divine *Geist* in each historical epoch, Müller did not like his views at all. While in general Müller was disinclined to abstract thought, his radical historicism

⁴⁷ H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York 1994) 199 (orig. German 1960; transl. after sec. edition 1986). Cf. H. Flashar, "Die methodisch-hermeneutischen Ansätze von Friedrich August Wolf und Friedrich Ast – Traditionelle und neue Begründungen", in: *PH* 21-31; R. Wiehl, "Schleiermachers Hermeneutik – Ihre Bedeutung für die Philologie in Theorie und Praxis", in: *PH* 32-67; A. Laks and A. Neschke (eds.), *La naissance du paradigme herméneutique. Schleiermacher, Humboldt, Boeckh, Droysen* [Cahiers de Philologie, vol. 10] (Lille 1990).

rebelled against philosophy in its guise of 'philosophy of history',⁴⁸ which subjected the authentic variety of history to the straitjacket of arrogant, manmade systems. In due course philosophy became a field which, a few issues excepted, could no longer satisfy him. Moreover, in spite of Kant and Hegel's German nationality, the speculative model itself appeared to him as a typical product of the French Enlightenment, which he associated with presumptuous claims to worldly power and the Napoleonic conquest of Europe, which had ravished the idyllic world of his youth.

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, on the other hand, offered the historian a model for coming to terms with the mind of the other, be it of an individual or a people. Respectfully empathizing with the mind of the other, the historian could grasp its innermost concerns and thus understand its connection with historical conditions. To appreciate historical authenticity in this way, Müller felt to be the major contribution of German (Protestant) historicism to the understanding of history. In a review of B. Constant's study of religion he pointed out

"... eine eigne Mischung von zwei verschiedenen Bildungselementen. Das eine ist ein echt französisches, es sind im Ganzen die Ansichten und Gesinnungen, welche, von den Encyclopädisten ausgegangen, durch die Revolution auf den Thron gestiegen, noch immer gerade den gebildetsten Theil der französischen Nation beherrschen und hier keiner nähern Bezeichnung bedürfen. Dagegen wollen wir das zweite Element ... so bezeichnen, daß wir als die Basis desselben einen höhern Begriff von der *inneren* Gesetzmäßigkeit des menschlichen Lebens und des Ganges der Geschichte und *eine größere Achtung* vor dem, was die Völker vor der Periode der herrschend gewordenen Reflexion hervorgebracht und gestaltet haben, vor dem stillen Weben des sich selbst noch nicht beobachtenden Menschengestes – als das Resultat desselben aber eine wärmere Hingebung an das positiv Geschichtliche, eine lebendigere Auffassung desselben in allen einzelnen Zügen und ein Hindurchdringen zu den inneren Lebenskräften, die es in seiner Eigenheit bestimmen, betrachten. In der That wäre ohne *diese Achtung, ohne dies stille und bescheidene Lauschen auf das Walten eines Geistes, den wir bewundern, je mehr wir ihn verstehen, – Eigenschaften, die mit jener hochmüthigen Aufklärung unverträglich sind* – die überraschend schnelle Erweiterung der Geschichtswissenschaft nach allen Seiten und Richtungen, nach Sprache, Staats- und Rechtsleben, Kunst und Philosophie, unmöglich gewesen, welche Erweiterung, mögen immer die

⁴⁸ On Herder's critique of Enlightened speculative history as a factor in the growth of historicism, Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (supra n. 47) 200ff. The kinship of Müller's ideas to those of Herder is obvious, but only an implicit appreciation is to be found in a letter by Müller from England to the historian A. H. L. Heeren (1760-1842) (AW-Br. no. 24 [4 June 1822] 31). Yet Herder's connection with the speculative model was still much stronger than Müller would allow for, and it must have been the Herderian focus on cultural autonomy and originality which appealed to Müller, possibly as it was applied by the Grimms with whom Müller was closely connected when they lived in Göttingen.

beiden andern Culturvölker unserer Zeit in einzelnen Werken vollendeter erscheinen, doch im Großen und Ganzen ein Werk des deutschen Sinnes ist."⁴⁹

Though Müller never became very intimate with Schleiermacher, who was a fellow Silesian from Breslau, he followed his courses and knew him well, lodging in the house of Schleiermacher's publisher Reimer.⁵⁰ When in 1823 his brother Julius, who studied theology, turned out to oppose Schleiermacher's ideas, Müller confessed his disappointment to their parents:

"Wie kann Julius so blind sein für geistige Kraft und Unkraft; doch denke und hoffe ich immer, es ist nur eine vorübergehende Desperation an der Kraft des menschl[ichen] Geistes in wissenschaftlicher Forschung, was ihn zu diesem Extrem getrieben hat."⁵¹

While thus absorbing historicist hermeneutics, both from Schleiermacher himself and from Böckh, Müller still valued Steffens' *Naturphilosophie*. To the question where this vision of life might be situated in historical terms, however, his Berlin education gave no answer. It was a problem he shared with many contemporary scholars. Thus F. W. J. von Schelling (1775-1854) offered *Naturphilosophie* as the underlying force uniting all human existence and history. True historical understanding depended on grasping this inner force, where historical change merged with consciousness. For Schelling, the particular was to be understood as a part of the universal, and without being teleological his system reintroduced an a priori meaning of myth and history. Yet – was myth indeed the intersection of *Naturphilosophie* and history? At this particular moment, then, the most pressing problem for Müller was to clarify his conception of history.

The problem of historical understanding was closely intertwined with the conceptualization of the subject matter of history. This defining process was hardly a conscious one, and only in retrospect we may discern the priorities leading to the more settled positions of the second half of the nineteenth century. Out of the amorphous whole that constituted the past, a field was chosen that was liable to a particular sort of historical interpretation. History – the term referring to this significant past – could be divided into a number of segments in terms of periodisation, thematisation, etc.; while what lay beyond these confines was a past without significance, either because it did not impinge on the lines of development which were considered relevant for the writing of history, or because its essential

⁴⁹ K. O. Müller, review of B. Constant, *De la religion, considérée dans sa source, ses formes et ses développements*, vol. III (Paris 1827); in: *GGA* St. 17-19, 1831; *KDS* 2.69-76, 69-70 (emphasis on Romantic Pietism reinforcing historicism added, JHB).

⁵⁰ *EMB* xxxviii-xxxix.

⁵¹ *Lebensbild* no. 61 (probably May 1823) 142. Yet Julius was not inclined to change his mind. His work on the inevitability of the concept of sin later earned him the nickname "Sünden-Müller", while Karl Otfried became known as "Griechen-Müller". Cf. Julius Müller, *Die christliche Lehre von der Sünde* (Breslau 1839).

characteristic was regarded as impervious to reconstruction or rational argument. It is not easy to offer clear and unambiguous distinctions between history and the past. With respect to the question of quality, history was associated with rationality and (historical) variety, the past with irrationality, unity and stability. Conceived within the speculative model, history was more or less equated with civilization. From a temporal perspective, then, the past was generally felt to precede history, but it could also surround history – in a different geographical area, or beneath its surface in a different sphere of life.

The thrust towards the rational in the definition of historical subject matter had much to do with the need for methodological clarity: rationality complied more easily with the demands of source criticism and made hermeneutic operations – creating a mental connection between the historian and the historical actor – less complicated. But again, it was precisely these conditions that generated new discontent. The Romantic dissatisfaction with over-rationalizing tendencies challenged a perception of (cultural) history that had no room for the most vital, inner experiences. To Müller, as we saw, the “internal” aspects were the formative ones conditioning “external” history. The sensitivity to variety and difference underlying historicism also created a new perception of myth.

The Enlightened approach had tended to read mythical texts as representations of reality of a specific kind, akin to allegory; apart from its style as a story, myth was not held to possess a quality or language of its own. Chr. G. Heyne (1729-1812) had been the first to attribute myth to a specific era by pointing out its specific features. Still arguing from the developmental model of history, he had defined this as a stage preceding actual history, a childlike, intrinsically poetic mode that had to give way to the full-grown capacity of civilization to render history and other forms of knowledge in a, rational, prose account. In brief, to Heyne myth belonged to the past, and had faded away with the coming of history. Heyne's discussions of myth had done much to enhance the fame of Göttingen University, as did his lectures on ancient art, and his successors F. G. Welcker (1784-1868) and Müller were appointed because they could continue his legacy. In the meantime, however, critics like Ph. Buttmann had developed Heyne's views into a more radical assessment of myth as a cultural form of expression which possessed a unique quality of its own, as we saw briefly above in his discussion with Müller. By now, myth was felt to consist of something else than rationality, but the question was how much and in what ways other elements contributed to its appearance, since undoubtedly it was also a creation of the human mind. This perception turned the understanding of myth into a special problem, in particular in its relation to history. The definition of myth as a specific expression of the human mind led to its conception as a field where judgments on history, philosophy and religion were both created and contested. Welcker was not

inclined to accept Heyne's explanatory framework, and Müller would finally offer his own.

Romantic historicism intensified the search for the true quality of myth, and the hermeneutic problems involved intensified likewise. If myth was something of a different nature than rationality, literary records could not be read in the usual way to decipher and understand it. The text of a myth, then, would need to be explained by recourse to a completely different set of referents than those employed in historical reconstruction. In the latter case, it was assumed that the texts reflected real historical events; mythology had to deal with a metamorphosis, to reach a level that lay much deeper than history and to come to terms with a phenomenon of an entirely different, but as yet undefined quality. Once again, the Romantic tendency to emphasize distinctions and to probe the deepest corners of the soul created both a new appreciation of myth and severe methodological problems. The more myth was held to be the product of a unique mental faculty, the more problematic its connection with historical discourse became. Second, to find one's way through the texts to reach this mythical entity, the written source material was to be removed layer by layer, until one left the realm of language altogether. A guide for this mental tour was found in the increasingly popular field of comparative linguistics, in particular etymology. An asset of this field was its scientific claims, working on laws of linguistic change that, read backwards, gave access to strata of culture otherwise hidden from view. Linguistics was striving to become a scholarly endeavour on a par with philological source criticism in its meticulous precision, but set on a different axis of time.

Since Heyne's heyday, then, the background and the foreground had changed places in the appreciation of myth. The Romantic inclination was to perceive myth as a cultural force par excellence, as one of the deepest, truest creative faculties of mankind, closely akin with religion. Just as Romantic historiography developed a preference for the Middle Ages, as *the* era of religiously inspired communal life, ancient historians, philosophers and theologians turned towards the earliest periods of antiquity to find its cultural authenticity. Müller's review of Constant may be quoted here again, with a different emphasis:

"... eine größere Achtung vor dem, was die Völker *vor der Periode der herrschend gewordenen Reflexion* hervorgebracht und gestaltet haben, vor dem stillen Weben des sich selbst noch nicht beobachtenden Menschengestes – als *das Resultat desselben ... eine wärmere Hingebung an das positiv Geschichtliche*, eine *lebendigere Auffassung* desselben in allen einzelnen Zügen und ein Hindurchdringen zu den *inneren Lebenskräften*, die es *in seiner Eigenheit bestimmen ...*"

When Müller accepted Heindorf's assignment on Numa, he set his first step in this domain of early, mythical history, and some differences between his interests and those of Niebuhr have been mentioned. In Berlin, he

pursued these interests further in his thesis, written in 1816 and published in 1817. Describing the community on the island of Aegina, he could reach for 'das Ganze': its internal history revealed in religious cult and mythical tradition, connected to its external history in the vein of Böckh.⁵² In two ways he offered in the *Aegineticorum liber* a new kind of history. He delineated a civilization defined by its local specificity and concomitant religious experience, and he systematically used both literary and archeological material to inform this history. Thus, for the time being, he made a solution of his own to the problems left by hermeneutics. The interlocking of literary and archeological documents distinguished his methods from philology or literary criticism. Taking the nucleus of locality and religiosity he had cherished for several years for the historical background, he consciously discarded any reference to universal history and substituted in-depth analysis for teleological development. This seemed a promising line of thought, and the ink on the *Aeginetica* had hardly dried when he told a friend about a new project:

"Meine historischen Bestrebungen haben mich jetzt von Aiginas industriösem Völklein ... auf das Cabirensystem Samothrakes hingewandt, dem ich nun mit allem Eifer obliege und den Ideen Schellings, Creuzers, ... Kannegießers ... kek entgegen zu treten denke."⁵³

Though Böckh dissuaded him from continuing the work on Samothrace,⁵⁴ the problem of myth and history lingered in Müller's mind. Not Schelling, but Creuzer turned out to be decisive.

Encounter with Creuzer's Symbolik

Fr. Creuzer (1771-1858), professor of Greek and Ancient History in Heidelberg since 1804, had won acclaim as an able philologist. His *Die historische Kunst der Griechen* (1803)⁵⁵ was built on a completely Kantian framework,⁵⁶ claiming that the

⁵² A. Böckh, *Die Staatshaushaltung der Athener* (Berlin 1817) 2 vols.

⁵³ Müller to E. F. J. Dronke, *G-Br.* no. 3 (18 October 1816) 4. He responded to F. W. J. Schelling, *Abhandlung über die Gottheiten von Samothrake* (Stuttgart 1815). P. F. Kannegießer (1774-1833), professor at Breslau, later professor of history at Greifswald.

⁵⁴ *G-Br.* 2.2-3.

⁵⁵ Fr. Creuzer, *Die historische Kunst der Griechen in ihrer Entstehung und Fortbildung* (Leipzig 1803); 2nd revised ed. by J. Kayser (Leipzig / Darmstadt 1845). On *Die historische Kunst* see A. D. Momigliano, "Friedrich Creuzer and Greek Historiography", in: A. D. M., *Studies* (*supra* n. 3) 1-14, though he erroneously sees much of Heyne and little of Kant in Creuzer's book; cf. "Skizze meines Lebens" (1822), in: Fr. Creuzer, *Aus dem Leben eines alten Professors* (Leipzig / Darmstadt 1848) 26.

⁵⁶ Kant's work was a major subject at the University of Jena, where Creuzer studied in 1790: "Ich excerpirte mir die ganze Kritik der reinen Vernunft." Creuzer, "Skizze" (*supra* n. 55) 18-19.

"... Aufgabe [*scil.* of history] ist die in der Zeit gegebene Natur nach den Gesetzen des Geistes zur Betrachtung darzustellen."⁵⁷

Within this framework, the great ancient historians were to be evaluated: thus Thucydides was characterized by his "hinstreben zum Erhabenen".⁵⁸ Though some elements of his thought on poetics and philosophy had been present in *Die historische Kunst*, his fundamental turn towards Romantic idealism and a rejection of Kant⁵⁹ occurred in his relationship (1804-1806) with Karoline von Günderode (1780-1806). In a letter to her (1805) he wrote:

"Oft bete ich zu der grossen Natur, daß sie mir verleihen möge Glück im treuen Forschen, um nur zu erkennen, was die große Vorwelt von ihr gewußt und in Sinnbildern dargestellt und was den unwürdigen Enkeln der Nachwelt verborgen ist – und wenn sie es wüßten, eine Thorheit sein würde."⁶⁰

His first attempt, *Idee und Probe alter Symbolik* (1806)⁶¹ took Dionysos and Pan for its theme, building the initial arguments for his ideas. After breaking off the relationship with Günderode, Creuzer remained committed to the cultural philosophy they had shared.⁶² He finished his publication of the Greek historical fragments and elaborated his ideas in the first edition of his *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (1810-1812).⁶³ Subsequently stimulated by the mythological writing of J. Görres (1776-1848)⁶⁴ and by the growing interest in Sanskrit, oriental studies, and comparative linguistics, Creuzer turned his work into a large-

⁵⁷ Elaborated in Creuzer, *Die historische Kunst* (*supra* n. 55) 175-202.

⁵⁸ Creuzer, *ibid.* 224.

⁵⁹ He later judged his *Historische Kunst* "ein Kantisch-Fichtescher Lappen", Creuzer, "Skizze" (*supra* n. 55) 26.

⁶⁰ 7 and 8 Dec. 1805; E. Rohde, *Friedrich Creuzer und Karoline von Günderode. Briefe und Dichtungen* (Heidelberg 1896) 79-80.

⁶¹ Fr. Creuzer, "Idee und Probe alter Symbolik", in: C. Daub and Fr. Creuzer (eds.), *Studien*, vol. 2, (Frankfurt / Heidelberg 1806) 224-324.

⁶² Various scholars, including Momigliano, "Friedrich Creuzer" (*supra* n. 55), attribute his interest in mythology, and especially his approach to it, completely to Günderode. Momigliano seems to feel little affinity with Creuzer as the author of the *Symbolik* or with Günderode for that matter, because it was these "problems" (*ibid.* 9) which put an end to Creuzer's historiographical work, which Momigliano considers to have been underrated. Thus Momigliano implicitly tends towards a "cherchez la femme"-argument, blaming Günderode for the *Symbolik* and the turn it gave to Creuzer's work. For a more sympathetic view of another famous ancient historian, see Rohde, *Friedrich Creuzer und Karoline von Günderode* (*supra* n. 60). In his letters to Karoline, Creuzer often refers to his conception of the unchanging soul which contains the Idea, and the poetry and symbols which arise from it – images which recur in the *Symbolik* and were his as well as hers.

⁶³ G. Fr. Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (Leipzig / Darmstadt 1810-1812) IV vols.; second edition IV vols. 1819-1821, expanded with two additional volumes: F. J. Mone, *Geschichte des Heidenthums im nördlichen Europa, Symbolik und Mythologie* vol. V and VI, 1822-1823; third edition 1837-1842. The impact of Creuzer's views was mainly due to the second, revised edition of 1819-1821. Since this was also the edition to which Müller responded at greatest length, the present analysis is based on this edition.

⁶⁴ J. Görres, *Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt* (Heidelberg 1810).

scale survey of the whole ancient world. (Pre)history, mythology and Neo-Platonist philosophy were fused in the second edition of the *Symbolik* (1819-1821). After its publication, the debate on the meaning of myth reached unprecedented heights.⁶⁵

Creuzer's starting point was his theory of the symbol. As the expression of early man's immediate experience of his natural surroundings, the symbol embodied both thought and sense perception. The symbol became linked with brief explanatory comments, which gradually expanded into a variety of longer narrative explanations or myths. Though local factors wielded some influence on the myths, behind this mythological diversity lay a single, original, symbolic world of experience which had developed into a deeply felt natural religion. The latter had its roots in the religions of Egypt and India. Since early man was not fully rational, priests emerged to make these narratives and explanations of the symbols their own preserve. This priestly doctrine spread from East to West, transmitted from people to people. The natural religion also reached Greece through Asia Minor, but this stage of culture was gradually supplanted in the classical Greek world by the more familiar, rationalistic Olympian religion and philosophy. A meticulous analysis of the textual material could still uncover the traces of what was once a universal natural symbolism and a mythic, poetic and at times ecstatic religion.

Creuzer's major contribution was his claim that the core of myth represented an original, unifying idea lying behind the multiplicity of mythical narratives. This core lay in the spiritual nature of mythopoetic man. His argument that the essence of the myth is its ability "das Gedachte in ein Geschehen umzusetzen",⁶⁶ is also characteristic of his work. It reveals him as an idealist who believed that religious and historical processes were determined by the human mind a priori. Creuzer's view of this spiritual nature and its creative, symbolic potential fully responded to the current preoccupations with the nature of human knowledge, the relationship of reason to other faculties, the essence of art,⁶⁷ and the origin of culture. Although he showed a marked interest in poetry and the visual arts, Creuzer by no means shared Heyne's perception of myth as a representation of history influenced by poetic fantasy. In Creuzer's eyes, it was *Geist* which created symbol, myth, and history; in this respect his work was philosophy decked out with philology,⁶⁸ making it all the more clear why Schelling held the *Symbolik* in high esteem.

Yet the *Symbolik* implies a more or less historical process, revealing Creuzer's receptivity to the speculative model of history. His own, rather

⁶⁵ Cf. E. Howald, *Der Kampf um Creuzers Symbolik. Eine Auswahl von Dokumenten* (Tübingen 1926).

⁶⁶ Creuzer, *Symbolik* (*supra* n. 63) I 99.

⁶⁷ On the relation between symbol and art, see *Symbolik*, *ibid.* I 62ff.

⁶⁸ As Howald paraphrases Creuzer's position in the third edition of the *Symbolik: Der Kampf* (*supra* n. 65) 13.

vague version was thoroughly inspired by Romantic neo-Platonism, which distinguished the *Symbolik* from the Enlightened variety.⁶⁹ His system focused on the development of myth, but it also offered the reader a view of the origin of religion and culture. Creuzer devoted a considerable number of pages to the way in which the mystical content of the symbol produced the demand for myth, whereupon the elementary myth was transformed into a ramified complex of ever expanding myths. It is evident that Creuzer interpreted this organic transformation from an essential connectedness to proliferation as a deterioration in the strength of the religious experience.⁷⁰ The development of mythology contained a historical transformation in which the rise of Greek religion eventually resulted in an alienation of the symbol. Creuzer therefore set myth within the framework of a historical process, but he did not regard history itself as a source of mythology. The diversity of mythical narratives, as an expression of the changeable nature of history, did violence to the unity of the symbolic idea.

The *Symbolik* provoked strong reactions. Some members of the public, including many students, were more than enthusiastic, but Creuzer was heavily criticized by a number of prominent classicists. His Heidelberg colleague Joh. H. Voss (1751-1826) began an extremely vitriolic campaign against Creuzer, which he crowned with the publication of an *Antisymbolik* in 1824.⁷¹ Though their tone was, generally speaking, more academic, many classical scholars rejected Creuzer's approach.⁷² Müller was soon to be one of the most important figures in this debate, not only because the issue was so central to his own writing, but also because the world of scholarship expected him to take a firm stand on either side.

Müller was acquainted with the first edition of the *Symbolik*; as we saw earlier, he was not particularly interested in the book, but rather in articulating his differences with Creuzer, Schelling and others. The excitement on the issue rose after the second edition of volumes I and II of the *Symbolik* (1819-1820), just when Müller had been appointed to professor extraordinarius in Göttingen (1819). He was preparing himself for his new duties and made an extensive tour to Dresden to see the collections of ancient art. Moreover, he was also working on various publications. While still on his first teaching job in Breslau (1818), he had embarked on

⁶⁹ Only the perception of development in stages shows a slight and formal kinship of the *Symbolik* to Heyne's ideas. Its radical transformation in idealist terms was among the qualities which later would make Bachofen appreciate the *Symbolik*.

⁷⁰ *Symbolik* (*supra* n. 63) I 88-89.

⁷¹ Joh. H. Voss, *Antisymbolik* (Stuttgart 1824).

⁷² On the main lines of the debate see Howald, *Der Kampf* (*supra* n. 65), which includes a discussion of G. Hermann, *Ueber das Wesen und die Behandlung der Mythologie. Ein Brief an Herrn Hofrat Creuzer* (Leipzig 1819), part of which can be found in K. Kerényi, *Die Eröffnung des Zugangs zum Mythos. Ein Lesebuch* [WdF 20] (Darmstadt 1967) 59-61. In this treatise, Hermann took all non-Greek elements to be irrelevant for Greek mythology.

his *Geschichten Hellenischer Stämme und Städte*.⁷³ Part one, *Orchomenos und die Minyer* he finished in the same year 1818. To preclude being mixed up with the countless other Karl Müllers, he accepted the advice of friends to add a Christian name to his original one. At first he chose Michael after his great-grandfather, but within a few days he decided on Otfried, exchanging the triumphant archangel for a name indicating humility and peace in the Pietist tradition.⁷⁴

In methods and concepts, *Orchomenos* elaborated the principles of the *Aeginetica*. To recover the Minyans of pre-Homeric Greece, Müller made a distinction between their internal history – religious life, character and *Weltanschauung* which developed in response to their natural surroundings – and their external history, economic activities and political developments. In mythical traditions, the first element was connected with the earliest, symbolic content of myth, the latter was reflected in its later, literary elaborations. Thus working from his idea of “das geistig und innerlich Bewegende”, religion and locality, he reconstructed the prehistory of Boeotia and the Minyans, while simultaneously showing why he disagreed with the view “daß in der Wurzel Alles Eins sey, und alle Offenbarung des Göttlichen Eine und dieselbe”⁷⁵. Historical understanding could result only from comprehending the individuality of a culture, more truly revealed in its internal than in its external history. Since this approach was a new one, for the time being one could do no more than offer episodic, fragmentary sketches. Only after studying the local histories in full, could one write a complete history of Greece which would grasp the cultural specificity of the Greeks. And only after doing this, might one aim at a comparison between the Greeks and other civilizations, to understand their kinship in a universal history of humanity. Thus *Orchomenos* responded to two current issues. Müller refuted the idea that the meaning of myth could be known a priori in favour of historical specificity, and he situated historical variety within a new concept of universal history.

⁷³ I am much indebted to H. S. Versnel's contribution on *Orchomenos* to the K. O. Müller-Tagung in Bad Homburg.

⁷⁴ On 1 Dec. 1818, he wrote to his father about the choice of Michael, and signed this letter accordingly; *Lebensbild* no. 30. A letter to Böckh of 5 Dec., *Br. Boeckh* and to his mother of the end of December, *Lebensbild* no. 31, he signed already with Karl Otfried. It is generally assumed, based on the account of Ranke, “C. O. Müller” (*supra* n. 15) 5, that it was Buttman who suggested Karl to add a second name, while it is unclear why he chose Otfried (*Lebensbild* viii-ix). Even if decisive documents are lacking, the Buttman-account seems unlikely. The letter *Lebensbild* no. 30 suggests an immediate connection between finishing *Orchomenos*, the circle of friends (Von der Hagen, Steffens, Von Raumer), the advice, and his decision. This was in Breslau, while Buttman of course was in Berlin. The exchange of letters within a few days is more probable between Breslau and Ohlau, than between Breslau and Berlin. This fact, added to the importance of Müller's father to any major decision in his life, Karl Daniel seems the most likely person to have suggested the name Otfried in response to his son's letter. The name Michael does not recur in the Müller family within two generations.

⁷⁵ *Orchomenos*² 3.

After making *Orchomenos* – his major work to date – fit for publication,⁷⁶ he engaged in an impressive range of work. In 1820, he also published work on the cult of Athena,⁷⁷ held his inaugural lecture on the Delphic tripod and published it,⁷⁸ wrote on Dionysos, and revised his tripod-publication for the journal *Amalthea* of C. A. Böttiger (1760-1835), not to mention his teaching, his new research, and the reviews he started writing for the *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*. In all this work Müller focused on mythological material, and in the fall of 1819, after finishing the proofs of *Orchomenos*, he began his systematic study of mythology.⁷⁹ He now read Creuzer's work thoroughly. Though he expected Creuzer to be critical of *Orchomenos* because of its preference for the local authenticity of Greek religion,⁸⁰ some of his convictions brought him near to Creuzer's ideas on the symbol, on *Weltanschauung* inspired by religious awe, and on the *Naturphilosophie* underlying these perceptions. Böttiger saw how close Müller came to Creuzer's views after reading a first draft of his article for the *Amalthea*, and he warned: "Traue Creuzers Dionysos nicht zu viel!"⁸¹ Yet Müller continued his interest in the *Symbolik*, even focusing his teaching on Creuzer's work in the next year, as a letter to Böttiger testifies:

"Hier in Göttingen ist es allerdings sehr voll und es werden wohl gegen 1200 Studenten da sein. Indeß hat dies auf mein kleines Auditorium wenig Einfluß, welches sich gern mit 20 Insassen begnügt. Auch wünsche ich mir nicht mehr, um ihm – wie diesmal – die noch sehr rohen Entwürfe einer Mythologie, die erst im dunkeln Werden begriffen ist, vorzudemonstrieren. Ich bin dabei Herrn Creuzer auf allen Fußstapfen nachgegangen, und habe selbst mit dem Indischen [i.e. Sanskrit, J.H.B.] angefangen, für das wir jetzt an Herrn Franz Bopp, der ein halb Jahr sich hier aufhalten will, einen tüchtigen Kenner bei uns haben."⁸²

In 1821 Müller published his first review of the first two volumes of the *Symbolik*, which will be discussed below. In these years 1819-1821 he even had to defend himself against charges of 'mysticism',⁸³ also the regular invective against Creuzer's idealism.

"Doch muss man sich hier gewaltig in Acht nehmen, nicht für einen Mystiker zu gelten, da der alte Göttingische Professorenschlag unter dem Namen Mysticismus alles mögl[iche] Naturphilosophie, romantische Poesie, neue

⁷⁶ *EMB* xxviii, xxxii; 1 Dec. 1818: manuscript sent off to publisher Max, *Lebensbild* no. 30, 36; printing finished Dec. 1819, *Lebensbild* no. 40, 61; published as K. O. Müller, *Geschichten Hellenischer Stämme und Städte*. I. *Orchomenos und die Minyer* (Breslau 1820; 2nd ed. 1844).

⁷⁷ K. O. Müller, *Minervae Poliadis sacra et aedem in arce Athenarum illustravit* (Göttingen 1820).

⁷⁸ K. O. Müller, *De tripode Delphico dissertatio* (Göttingen 1820).

⁷⁹ *Lebensbild* no. 40 (17 Dec. 1819) 62.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Böttiger to Müller, *G-Br.* no. 15 (2 Jan. 1820) 20.

⁸² Müller to Böttiger, *G-Br.* no. 22 (21 Nov. 1820) 33.

⁸³ *EMB* xlvi. Even in the *Prolegomena* 112, he was still aware that his theory "manchem unsrer Alterthumsforscher dunkel, ja mystisch vorkomme". For the context, criticism actually levelled against Müller's empiricism, cf. Pflug, "Methodik und Hermeneutik" (*supra* n. 8) 137.

Theologie, höhere Geschichtsforschung, symbolische Mythologie u.s.w. in einen Topf wirft und in den Ausguss schüttet."⁸⁴

Müller was aware that his Göttingen colleagues expected him to comply with their views, but his own ideas prohibited him to do so.

Polemic, however, started from the other side; the chain of events shows a considerable confusion in the positions involved and mutual charges of deficient scholarship. Creuzer immediately added some depreciating remarks on *Orchomenos* in his new edition of the *Symbolik*.⁸⁵ In 1821, F. Sickler, influenced by Creuzer's work, had turned against Müller's views expounded in the latter's inaugural lecture and in his essay *Ueber den angeblich ägyptischen Ursprung der griechischen Kunst*.⁸⁶ Here Müller had renounced the current idea that Greek art was deeply influenced by, if not dependent on, Egyptian art. Though he was sincerely interested in Egyptian culture and its art, so thoroughly pervaded by religion,⁸⁷ he held firmly to his principle of local, 'national' creation of culture. Art and civilization originated in religion, which itself sprang from the relationship between the soul and natural circumstances. One might admire and love different cultures, but to attribute the one's features to the other was to deny the essence that marked their very qualities. This held true for Egypt and Greece, as well as for modern cultures. F. Kortüm, likewise an admirer of Creuzer, had attacked *Orchomenos*, calling it among other things "ungeschichtliche Geschichten".⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Müller to his parents, *Lebensbild* no. 39 (21 Nov. 1819) 54-55.

⁸⁵ (Müller first enjoys Böckh's praise of *Orchomenos*). – "Indess ist mir immer die offene Erklärung sehr lieb, da ich von der andern Seite bedrängt werde. Creuzer hat auf meine Sätze und Beweisführungen in seiner neusten Mythologie mit einem etwas aristokratischen Air, aber auf höchst ungenügende Weise geantwortet; ich habe ihm darauf in meiner jetzigen Abhandlung [*scil.* the essay on Greek and Egyptian art] kurz und bestimmt und möglichst modest reponirt. – Es giebt auch manches Tageblattsgeklätsch, was mich wenig angeht." Müller to his parents, *Lebensbild* no. 45 (received on 23 Aug. 1820) 85.

⁸⁶ K. O. Müller, "Ueber den angeblich ägyptischen Ursprung der griechischen Kunst", in: *Kunstblatt, Beiblatt zum Morgenblatt* (1820) no. 79; *KDS* 2.523-537. Here Müller took sides with Winckelmann who had been severely criticized for his belittlement of the dependence of Greek on Egyptian art. He disagreed with Winckelmann, though, in his argumentation: to the latter, Egyptian art was a stage before Greek art; to Müller, who rejected the idea of progressive stages, it was a matter of independent development of two different cultures. The same problem, though pertaining to myth instead of art, he had discussed in *Orchomenos*.

⁸⁷ "... und ging zur Kunstgeschichte, die ich diesen Sommer lese. Da musste ich nun erst einen Streifzug durch indische, persische, ägyptische Monumente machen: das Interesse der Arbeit häufte sich, auch die Schwierigkeiten nahmen zu ... Ich habe aber dabei das ägyptische Alterthum so lieb gewonnen, daß wenn ich nicht von dem Gange der Vorlesung weiter mit fortgerissen würde, ich mich an die Enträtslung der Hieroglyphen machen würde, welche ich nach aufgefundenen Spuren nicht für unmöglich halte." Müller to his parents, *Lebensbild* no. 42 (26 March 1820) 70. On his various publications on Egyptian culture and art, see *EMB* lv, and note. On the general criticism of Müller's principles, expounded in *Orchomenos* and other works, that the core of each culture, Greek, Egyptian or otherwise, is originally its own and not to be confused with later, mutual influences, see *EMB* xlviii.

⁸⁸ For this meaning of "das Geschichtliche", compare the views of Schelling of an immutable idea, underlying and conditioning all historical change.

Reacting to this turmoil, Müller's friend M. H. E. Meier congratulated him with his defense in *Orchomenos* of the Greek nature of Greek religion against influences by

“jüdische, phönikische, aegyptische, indische und Gott weiss noch welche andre Grundlage. ... [E]s möge Ihnen gefallen, in einer kleinen Schrift die Grundsätze zusammen zu stellen und zu erläutern, die nach Ihrer Ansicht bei der Behandlung der Mythologie, um daraus geschichtliche Resultate zu finden, zu beobachten seien. In diesem Streben werden Sie sich weder durch den Creuzer-Sicklerischen Mysticismus noch durch die dumme Unverschämtheit des H. Kortüm abhalten lassen, dessen Angriff gegen Sie gar lächerlicher Art ist.”⁸⁹

It would not be until four years later, however, that Müller would publish the kind of “Schrift” Meier had suggested him to write. In 1821, he was still involved with the *Symbolik*. In his ‘reply’ to Sickler he fought this self-acclaimed follower of Creuzer with the weapons of his patron, whose thought he knew and understood profoundly – just as he was to do in later years with over-zealous Kantians.

“Die alte Symbolik hat ohne Zweifel eine ähnliche Entstehung wie ein großer Theil der Sprache; sie verfolgt Analogieen zwischen Naturgegenständen und Ideen, und wer sich in die lebhafteste Anschauungsweise kindlicher, aber von Natur sinnreicher Völker zu versetzen weiß, wird manche dieser Beziehungen nach und nach mit inniger Freude auffinden. So waren die Griechen. Aber welch’ ein bornirtes und von aller Naturanschauung entblößtes, rohes und überverständiges Volk zugleich müßte es gewesen sein, welches nach zufälliger Lautähnlichkeit (so meint doch Hr. Sickler) den Naturgegenständen willkürliche Bedeutung aufgedrückt. Daß die Symbolik des ehrwürdigen Creuzer nicht von denselben Grundsätzen ausgeht, wird jedem einleuchten, der das wichtige Hauptwerk studirt. Wie auffallend nun, daß der Verf. auf seinem Wege Ergebnisse gefunden hat, die jenen ‘keineswegs entgegenstehn, die vielmehr dieß größtentheils unterstützen, im Einzelnen wie im Ganzen’.”⁹⁰

If indeed his kinship to Creuzer's ‘mysticism’ caused him any uneasiness, it must only have stimulated him to develop his views concerning mythology more systematically, and to validate his own ideas in research. The first he pursued mainly by reading – and reviewing – the work of others, and in his teaching. The latter was realized in an astonishing number of publications, both minor writings as well as *Die Dorier* (1824).⁹¹ He pursued his interest in ancient art, enhanced by his journey to the

⁸⁹ M. H. E. Meier (1796-1855) to Müller, *G-Br.* no. 25 (23 Sept. 1821) 38.

⁹⁰ K. O. Müller, “Review of F. Sickler, Homers Hymnus an Demeter. Griechisch mit metrischer Uebersetzung und ausführlichen Wort- und Sacherklärungen durch Auflösung der ältesten Mysterien- und Tempelsprache in Hellas vermittelt, nebst einem Briefe an Hrn. G. Hofrath Creuzer” (1820); published in *GGA* St. 69 (1821); *KDS* 1.224-227, 226.

⁹¹ K. O. Müller, *Geschichten Hellenischer Stämme und Städte, II. Die Dorier* (Breslau 1824) 2 vols.

Netherlands, England, and France in the summer of 1822 to see the collections of antiquities, both for its own sake as well as for its significance as an expression of ancient (Greek) culture and religion. Böttiger, a professional archeologist, added to the letters of recommendation a sympathetic and reassuring farewell, implicitly referring to Müller's interest in Creuzer:

"Durch Ihr Auge wollen wir alles gern mit sehen. Sie sind von keiner mystischen Hypothese behaftet."⁹²

Even after his return from France, Müller resumed his classroom lectures on themes which seem more essential to Creuzer's writing than to his own.⁹³

The personal relations between the two scholars may have been guarded, due to the criticisms Creuzer and his students had made of Müller's *Orchomenos* and Müller's first review of Creuzer, but certainly were not embittered. Müller wrote to his parents:

"Nur das eine. Ich habe hier eine Recension von Creuzers Mythologie eingerückt, die zwar in nichts nachgiebig aber doch von Achtung gegen den würdigen Mann erfüllt war; ich weiß nun aus einem Briefe von ihm an Heeren und andren Nachrichten, daß sie, im Gegensatz einer sehr ingrimmigen Critik, mit der der alte Voß auf ihn losgestiegen ist, den besten Eindruck auf ihn gemacht hat."⁹⁴

Some events indicate that the colleagues of Müller and Creuzer often assumed their relationship to be more spiteful than it was.⁹⁵ Shortly after his arrival in Göttingen, Müller had felt this to be the case:

"Hier sieht man meinen Streit mit Creuzer gern, da sich die Göttinger auf seine Symbolensprache gar nicht verstehen mögen. Auch, meint Heeren, hätte ich schon den Göttingschen Ton recht gut getroffen, indem ich alle Polemik,

⁹² Böttiger to Müller, *G-Br.* no. 30 (24 March 1822) 49.

⁹³ Letter by K. L. Sillig to Böttiger, 20 Nov. 1822: Sillig relates how he enjoys Müller's course on mythology, with its survey of Indians, Egyptians, Near Eastern peoples, Persians, Hellenes, Italians. Quoted in *G-Br.* 2.31, no. 36. Compare with Meier's letter to Müller!

⁹⁴ Müller to his parents, *Lebensbild* no. 49 (18 July 1821) 94. See also Müller to Tieck, *G-Br.* no. 27 (26 Nov. 1821) 43; and again: "In dem heftigen Streite zwischen Creuzer und Voß bin ich so halb und halb Bundesgenosse des ersten; doch werde ich wohl nicht hineingezogen werden", to his parents, *Lebensbild* no. 50 (6 Aug. 1821) 96. "Daß ich mit Creuzer in freundschaftlichem Verhältnisse stehe, habe ich wohl schon geschrieben", *Lebensbild* no. 51 (1 Nov. 1821) 99.

⁹⁵ See e.g. the letter from F. C. Schlosser (1776-1861), professor of history in Heidelberg, to Müller: "Wenn Sie uns einmal besuchen wollen, sollen Sie mir recht lieb seyn; auch kommen Sie jetzt mit Creuzer in keine Collision, er läßt die Symbolik ihren Weg gehen ...", *AW-Br.* no. 27 (1 April 1823) 36. But it was also Schlosser whose criticism of *Die Dories* (*Heidelb. Jahrb. Lit.* 1824, no. 48, 764) was such that Müller chose this review (and another one) to refute in an "Antikritik" in the *Prolegomena*. Böttiger suspected Creuzer of having set up Schlosser against Müller (letter to Müller, *G-Br.* no. 66 [24 Oct. 1824]). In fact, though, it was Voss who had done so, not Creuzer, as Heeren wrote to Böttiger on November 1, 1824; see *G-Br.* 2.50.

Sticheleien und Abfertigungen, gleichsam Göttingen vorahnd, vermieden habe [scil. in *Orchomenos*, J.H.B.]."⁹⁶

In the course of events, additional factors may have contributed to this misjudgment. Creuzer, for one, was not an easy character, though he was never so aggressive as his opponent Voss.⁹⁷ Moreover, in his attacks on the *Symbolik*, the latter had emphasized Creuzer's alleged embrace of Roman Catholicism;⁹⁸ Müller's adherence to his Pietist Protestantism was well-known. But Müller was of a vastly different cast of mind than Voss. And precisely because his Pietism had contributed so much to his view of religion and myth, Müller was more concerned with the *Geist* of belief than with the *Buchstabe* of Christian creed.⁹⁹ For his part, Creuzer emphatically denied that he had converted from his original Lutheranism to Catholicism.¹⁰⁰ He denounced all those who connected scholarly positions to denominational loyalties. Such narrow-mindedness was incompatible with the deep understanding the study of myth demanded.¹⁰¹

Their unmistakable kinship, particularly with regard to the origin and significance of religious feeling, contributed to Creuzer and Müller's mutual respect. Creuzer added to vol. IV of the *Symbolik* (1821):

⁹⁶ Müller to his parents, *Lebensbild* no. 41 (29 Jan. 1820) 67-68.

⁹⁷ "Meine auswärtigen Verhältnisse stehn gut; insonderheit hat Creuzer einen mir sehr ehrenvollen Waffenstillstand mit mir geschlossen, wozu wohl besonders der wüthende Angriff des alten Voß mitgewirkt hat, des Fanatikers für die Nüchternheit." Müller to Tieck, *G-Br.* no. 27 (26 Nov. 1821) 43.

⁹⁸ Voss' *Antisymbolik* contained a collection of articles, published between 1819 and 1823, which vigorously opposed the *Symbolik*. He did so under the banner of rationalism, and also interpreted Creuzer's work as a Catholic offensive, which he wanted to rebut in the name of Protestantism. To Voss, Protestantism and rational freedom were one and the same, while he identified Catholicism with the blackest oppression, and he defended this conviction with his venomous pen. When his former friend Leopold Count Stolberg (1750-1819) converted to (a liberal kind of) Roman Catholicism, Voss attacked him in public treatises, like *Wie ward F. L. Stolberg ein Unfreier?* (1817), and after his death *Bestätigung der Stolbergschen Umtriebe, nebst einem Anhang über persönliche Verhältnisse* (Stuttgart 1820). Creuzer wrote to his friend Savigny: "Der alte Voss sitzt diesen Winter her über einem Annihilirungswerke, dessen Gegenstand meine Mythologie ist. Er wird nämlich in der Jen L.Z. beweisen, dass es 1) mit meiner Symbolik nichts 2) dass sie vom Teufel 3) ich aber, der Verfasser, ein Krypto-Katholik und eine Genosse der neuaufliebenden Jesuiten sei." *Briefe Friedrich Creuzers an Savigny (1799-1850)*, ed. H. Dahlmann (Berlin 1972) no. 119 (15 May 1821) 334. Müller refused to take up an explicit stance on the tone of the *Antisymbolik*, despite the temptation to do so, *KDS* 2.25. He confined his remarks to a few specific points of detail.

⁹⁹ It even seems that precisely in his religiosity Müller truly grasped Creuzer's intentions. The foundation of the *Symbolik* is an idealist *Naturphilosophie*. Roman Catholicism could be reflected mainly, if not only, in the *Symbolik*'s representation of a primordial monotheism (testifying to a debate which had been going on for several centuries). The priests, who had created myths out of the symbols, a) originated in the East and had nothing to do with the main channels of Christianity, b) belonged to a stage of diffusion and actual decay of primary symbolism (they had played a more positive role in *Die historische Kunst der Griechen*).

¹⁰⁰ Creuzer, "Skizze" (*supra* n. 55) 59.

¹⁰¹ Creuzer, "Skizze", *ibid.* 55-65. His defense of the *Symbolik* and scorn of the petty-minded religious politics elevate these pages above the general tone of the *Leben eines alten Professors*. Why he nevertheless continued to speak ill of Pietism, see the other half of my diptych (*supra* n. 1).

"Um so willkommener sind mir die fruchtbaren Forschungen des gelehrten und unermüdeten Verfassers hellenischer Orts- und Stammesgeschichten, K. O. Müller. Ich denke mir ihn gern, auch wo er von mir abweicht, als meinen Mitarbeiter ... Solche Untersuchungen, wie die Müllerischen sind, müssen noch mehrere folgen, wenn die griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte für andere Wissenschaften des klassischen Altertums fruchtbar werden soll."¹⁰²

Yet if the differences between their views were overestimated or their motivations misunderstood, a major difference of another kind was unmistakable as well. *Orchomenos* and the second *Symbolik*, published simultaneously and sharing allegiances to Romantic *Naturphilosophie*, nevertheless pointed in different directions. Creuzer's *Symbolik* served Müller to find his own position on the most challenging problem: that of tracing and understanding the interconnections among religion, myth and history. He told his parents:

"Meine Mythologie macht mir genug zu schaffen, in der Ausarbeitung wie im Vortrag, da ich sie mit dem fernsten Orient eröffnet habe und es mir sehr schwer wird, die Ideen der ältesten Culte tief und doch klar, gründlich und doch allgemein verständlich zu ergreifen."¹⁰³

The Gordian knot of myth and history

Müller presented his opinions in two reviews of the controversial work in its revised edition. The first consisted of an extensive review of the first two parts of the *Symbolik* (1821). He made no attempt to disguise his admiration for Creuzer's achievement:

"Niemand wird nach gründlicher Lesung des Werks leugnen wollen, daß sich bei den bekannten Völkern des geschichtlichen Menschenstamms verwandte Ideen und Erkenntnisse von der Gottheit wiederfinden, die gleich den Elementen der Sprache als ein Erbe aus vorgeschichtlicher Zeit anzusehen sind, Ideen, die sich sehr früh in bedeutungsvolle Symbole verkörpert haben, welche eine späte Zeit, jener Naturanschauung entwachsen, meist unverstanden mit einer gewissen heiligen Scheu fortpflanzte."¹⁰⁴

Indeed, it would have been untrue to everything he stood for to deny the affinity between his own convictions and those of Creuzer, who had rendered them in wonderfully imaginative prose dealing with a wealth of ancient art and literature. The mental capacities of early mankind, the

¹⁰² Creuzer, *Symbolik* (*supra* n. 63) IV, xx. Cf. *G-Br.* 2.25. This remark he added after his criticism of *Orchomenos* in vol. II of the *Symbolik*, *ibid.* 676 n. 395, and after Müller's first review.

¹⁰³ Müller to his parents, *Lebensbild* no. 46 (30 Dec. 1820) 87.

¹⁰⁴ K. O. Müller, "Friedrich Creuzer's *Symbolik* und *Mythologie*. Mit einem Heft Abbildungen zum ganzen Werk auf 60 Tafeln und mit mehreren eingedruckten Holzschnitten. Leipzig und Darmstadt 1819. Zweite völlig umgearbeitete Ausgabe. Th. I, S. iv. u. 799. II. 1006 in 8." (1819), in *KDS* 2.3-20; published in *GGA* St. 95, 1821; quoted *KDS* 2.3.

double nature of the symbol – the core of religion – consisting both of the soul and of the physical senses; the immediacy of nature, its effect on the mind of the beholder and the awe expressed in religious feeling – it was all there. But then their ways parted. Müller's main objections concerned the nature of myth, Creuzer's universality of ancient religion as opposed to his own principle of locality, and the ensuing relation between myth and history.

Müller rejected Creuzer's idea that Greek mythology was nothing but an echo of a religion which came from elsewhere with the decisive argument of the interrelatedness of myth and language:

“Wer hat denn den Griechen diese feinen Unterscheidungen der Syntax, wer den weisen Gebrauch ihrer Partikeln, wer die kunstreichste aller Künste, die Sprache gelehrt, wenn nicht der eigne Genius des Volks?”¹⁰⁵

Myth and religion were certainly both derived from the same source, but it was myth in particular which displayed a sensitivity to specific historical conditions and hence of national difference:

“Die Götter erscheinen in den agrarischen Religionen als die tiefen Quellen des Segens und Gedeihens, und die Menschen selbst betrachten sich als Theile der Natur, deren Geschick mit dem aller übrigen Naturwesen dasselbe ist. In Griechenland beruhen alle Mysterien auf dieser agrarischen Cultur und wurden daher nothwendig von dem freien hellenischen Leben zurückgedrängt; wie denn die eigentlichen Hellenen, die Dorer, keine Mysterien hatten und kannten.”¹⁰⁶

If myth forged and expressed the connection between the deepest residues of the mind and the experience of time and place, Creuzer's construction of the stage when priests held sway over religion and myth was misconceived. Time and again Müller drew attention to the arbitrary and impressionistic character of Creuzer's explanations.

Müller's second review had an entirely different character. He published it in 1825 after he finished his *Prolegomena*, and it bears the marks of an author who has decided where he stands.¹⁰⁷ No longer intending a point-by-point criticism of Creuzer, Müller here distanced himself from the so-called ‘rational’, but above all inflexible critics (such as Voss, Sickler, and others) who reduced every difference of opinion to a simple

¹⁰⁵ *KDS* 2.5.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 7.

¹⁰⁷ K. O. Müller, “Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker besonders der Griechen, von Dr. Friedrich Creuzer, Professor der alten Litteratur zu Heidelberg. Zweite völlig ungearbeitete Ausgabe. Dritter und Vierter Theil. Leipzig und Darmstadt 1821. S. VI. 569. S. XXVI. 747. in Octav”, in *KDS* 2.21-25. It is possible that Müller only published it much later (*GGA* St. 38, 1825), but it seems more likely that he also wrote it in 1824 or even 1825, i.e. about the time he wrote his *Prolegomena*; in the same issue of *GGA* Müller also reviewed the *Antisymbolik* by Voss; *KDS* 2.25-30; and Creuzer's position seems to be an issue which he felt he had now resolved.

rejection. On the contrary, he implicitly took sides with Creuzer's approach to symbols in his appreciation of the latter's speculative bent:

"Es ist also nicht Lehre, nicht Mittheilung des Gedachten als solchen, was der Mythos beabsichtigt; sondern er geht schon aus einer Stimmung des Gemüthes hervor, in welcher alles innerliche Leben, in der Regel an äußerliche Begebenheiten sich anknüpfend, nothwendig durch wirklich geglaubte Personen und Handlungen dargestellt wird.

...

Es ist ... klar, daß eine gewisse Begeisterung auch dem Mythologen kaum fehlen darf und dem Verf., daß er sich derselben hingeeben, mehr zum Lobe als zum Vorwurf gereichen muß: nur ist freilich gerade hierin dem Subjectiven sehr viel Spielraum gelassen."¹⁰⁸

It is equally clear, however, that he found Creuzer's notion of a priestly doctrine originating in the East unacceptable. He noted that his differences of opinion with Creuzer were so profound that he could not read a page without disagreeing with him. There was therefore no point in criticizing the *Symbolik* in greater detail.¹⁰⁹ Instead, Müller had decided to expound his own position with regard to myth and history, invoked by his interest in the discussion of the *Symbolik* and by the criticisms levelled at *Die Dorier* (1824).

Although the two volumes on the Dorian tribes were originally conceived as the second installment in his series of local histories of Greece, the book equally served as a response to the criticism against *Orchomenos*.¹¹⁰ Müller had started working on *Die Dorier* by the end of 1820, in the heyday of his interest in Creuzer and of the turmoil of the reviews. The polemical element reveals itself in a way that marks the differences between *Die Dorier* and the *Prolegomena*.¹¹¹ The latter opens with an explicit rebuttal of his critics, while the second and largest part consists of a systematic account of his ideas. The *Dorier* as a whole is provocative. In retrospect it becomes clear why Müller, beside working in haste, came to employ his ideas with an unmistakable rashness. On the one hand, in the cult of Apollo which he held to be specifically Dorian and to have framed the conservative "Ständestaat" of Sparta, Müller saw his own ideals reflected, as a letter to his parents testifies:

¹⁰⁸ KDS 2.22-23.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 21.

¹¹⁰ "Meine litterarischen Fehden mit Creuzer und jetzt mit Sickler, Rektor zu Hildburghausen, sind nicht unerfreulich; aber mit einer demokratischen Wuth hat mich kürzlich Kortüm, Profeßor in Neuwied, angefallen, weil ich im Alterthum etwas aristokratisch bin. Meine Dorier sollen ihm die Schuld mit breitem Schwerdte bezahlen." Müller to his parents, *Lebensbild* no. 48 (21 May 1821) 93.

¹¹¹ K. O. Müller, *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie. Mit einer antikritischen Zugabe* (Göttingen 1825). Pflug, "Methodik und Hermeneutik" (*supra* n. 8) 123, underscores the "Streitschrift" character of the *Prolegomena*, but in fact this applies only to its first part, unless one regards any general exposition of method or theory as polemical by definition.

"In meinem nächsten Band der Hellenischen Geschichte hoffe ich ein Beispiel eines Götterdienstes aufzustellen, der der erhabenste und reinste und zugleich moralisch vollkommenste war, der vom Standpunkt des Heidenthums aus gedenkbar ist, des Apollon."¹¹²

But on the other hand he admitted to Tieck that he did not succeed in connecting the cultural core of the Dorians to their local experiences, as had been the case in Aegina and Boeotia:

"... so muß ich auch etwas von meinen litterarischen Plänen referiren. Ich habe zum Gegenstand des zweiten Bandes die *Dorier* gewählt, freilich ein weit größeres Thema als die Minyer; auch weiß ich noch nicht, wie ich es bezwingen werde. Religion, Staat, Kunst und gemeines Leben sind bei diesem Volksstamm so eigenthümlich, daß man wohl sagen kann: es habe nie eine schärfer ausgeprägte Form menschlichen Seins und Tuns gegeben. Die Entwicklung des Dorischen Charakters aus den tiefsten Gründen, zu welchen Fr. Schlegel und Schleiermacher manche Andeutung gegeben haben, überlasse ich freilich Andern; ich will mich mehr in den mittlern historischen Gegenden halten, wo man sich begnügt, die Nationalität als gottgegebenbe Bestimmung unerklärt stehen zu lassen."¹¹³

In leaving the "Nationalität" of "die eigentlichen Hellenen, die Dorer", thus unexplained, he turned the "Eigenthümlichkeit" of the Dorians into a formative force in its own right. All these factors together resulted in a book which even in the eyes of his friends was markedly uneven in critical judgment.¹¹⁴ His enemies used the weaknesses of *Die Dorier* as damaging proof against his approach as a whole, either exemplified by its blemishes in source criticism, or by elements reminiscent of Creuzer.¹¹⁵ Though he had meant to emphasize his scholarly independence in *Die Dorier*, now the validity of his scientific enterprise was at stake. Within about four months, the *Prolegomena* were finished.¹¹⁶ The book referred by its title to Kant's

¹¹² *Lebensbild* no. 46 (received 30 Dec. 1820) 87.

¹¹³ To Ludwig Tieck, *G-Br.* no. 24 (12 April 1821) 36.

¹¹⁴ Cf. *G-Br.* 2.66, 49-52; Pflug, "Methodik und Hermeneutik" (*supra* n. 8) 125.

¹¹⁵ "L. B. D." in: *Jenaische Allgemeine Litteratur Zeitung* nr. 151-162, Aug. 1824; Schlosser in: *Heidelberger Jahrbuch der Litteratur* nr. 57, 1824. Schlosser wrote his review partly out of his allegiance to Voss, *G-Br.* 2.51. Perhaps the title of Müller's reaction in the *Prolegomena* to the articles which had been directed against *Die Dorier* – he used the term "Antikritiken" – contains an implicit reference to Voss' "Antikritik" of the *Symbolik*; Müller, *Prolegomena* viiff., 1ff. The term "Antikritik" was not uncommon at this time, but that does not exclude a deliberate choice for a title of this kind. For indications that some interpretations in *Die Dorier* were influenced directly by Creuzer, see the other half of my diptych (*supra* n. 1).

¹¹⁶ He announces to his brother "eine Schrift von etwa 12-15 Bogen ... 'Zur Methodik und Kritik des mythologischen Studiums. Eine Elementarschrift, auch für den Recensenten der 'Dorier' in der Jenaischen Litteraturzeitung von K. O. Müller'" (*Lebensbild* no. 70 [22-26 Oct. 1824] 165). Then, on New Years Day to his parents: "... daß meine Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie, so heißt jetzt die neue Schrift, die ich herausgebe – zu 20 Bogen anschwellen (wovon blos 3 antikritisch sind), und ein recht ordentliches Buch werden, womit ich wohl noch gegen bessere Gegner das Feld behaupten könnte", *Lebensbild* no. 71, 167.

Prolegomena (1783), and on the whole Müller's choice of Kant marks an interesting turn.

In spite of all criticism levelled at his rationalism, Kant's system was still held to be the foundation of scientific knowledge. As we saw earlier, in many universities Kant's work was part of the philosophical curriculum, and all self-respecting scholars were expected to become acquainted with his writings. In the 1790's, when trying to write a new kind of historiography of the ancient historians, Creuzer had first turned to Kant to find a framework; Niebuhr too had felt that Kant provided the systematic order he wanted, at least until he encountered Fichte.¹¹⁷ Hermann had seen Kant's system as the solid methodological basis of philology, which would rescue it from controversies on its aims and practices. Müller adhered foremost to Schleiermacher's rethinking of Kant, but in addition he made Kant's epistemology an instrument for his own purposes. Of all Kant's writings, he probably knew the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft* (1790) best.¹¹⁸ He may have read it by (the end of) 1820, since some ideas and even elements of the vocabulary of the *Urtheilskraft* seem to echo in his writing at the time. For instance, his comment on Apollo to his parents reverberates Kant's observation that:

"ein Gefühl für das Erhabene der Natur [läßt sich] nicht wohl denken, ohne eine Stimmung des Gemüts, die der zum Moralischen ähnlich ist, damit zu verbinden ..."¹¹⁹

Kant's phrase "die Stimmung des Gemüts", which reflects the mental climate of the decades around 1800, recurs frequently in Müller's work, for instance in his review of Creuzer and in his *Prolegomena*. But Kant's work also offered Müller more general ideas which could be transposed to suit his own objectives. In the early 1820's, Müller's assumptions about the workings of the mind, its response to nature and its creation of religion and culture were at times so programmatic, that his brother Eduard came to qualify it as a kind of determinism.¹²⁰ Particularly in *Die Dorier* Müller had

¹¹⁷ G. Walther, *Niebuhrs Forschung* (Stuttgart 1993) 83-113.

¹¹⁸ According to Pflug, "Methodik und Hermeneutik" (*supra* n. 8) 356, Müller had read only the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, since he quotes this work in the introduction to his *Handbuch der Archäologie der Kunst* (Breslau 1835), and not the *Prolegomena*, but it is unclear to me why Pflug can be so sure about this. The "categories" (below, review of Hermann) originally belong to the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, and the point Müller raises against Lobeck is derived from the *Urtheilskraft* but harkens back to the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788). Now it is likely that Müller, as Kant's ideas were 'in the air', knew them as much from hearsay as from his own reading, the more so since Kant's abstract-theoretical discourse did not match Müller's preferences. It is clear, moreover, that Müller's appropriation of Kant was selective at best, arbitrary and opportunistic at worst. Müller's reading program, however, is not entirely known, except for a few inferences based on his letters and of course his reviews, which did not include Kant's publications. Research in his *Nachlass* might throw more light on this matter; for the time being, Pflug's assumption seems unjustified to me.

¹¹⁹ Imm. Kant, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. W. Weischedel; vol. V (Darmstadt 1966) 358.

¹²⁰ "... einer Art Determinismus ..., der auch das geistige Sein des Menschen der Idee eines aus eignen inneren Lebenstrieben mit einer gewissen Naturnothwendigkeit sich entwickelnder

argued from the self-evident truth of his views. This self-evidency was precisely the object of analysis in Kant's *Prolegomena* and *Urtheilskraft*. Müller did not give up his ideas on the core of myth and history, but he had to sort them out by making its understanding more systematic. "Wissenschaft", then, should not imply rationality as the inevitable subject matter of history, but rational clarity and knowledge of the human mind as the leading principles in the process of interpretation. When the particular was to be interpreted in terms of the whole, arguments should be full, honest to the facts and systematic. Here Kant was a formidable helpmate. So in 1830 Müller opposed Chr. A. Lobeck (1781-1860) when the latter acknowledged too few different capacities of the mind, with arguments from Kant:

"Wie wenig aber die wissenschaftliche Sprache nun schon seit mehreren Jahrzehenden gewohnt ist, das Symbolische dem Allegorischen gleichzusetzen, kann dem Verf. schon Kant zeigen, der in der Kritik der Urtheilskraft S. 255ff. die symbolische Darstellung der schematischen ... entgegengesetzt ..."121

And because of Lobeck's lack of a systematic account in these terms, Müller found himself

"unfähig, den allgemeinen Grundsätzen, wodurch das einzelne Factum erst seine wissenschaftliche Bedeutung erhält, und dem daraus abgeleiteten Systeme des Verf. sich anzuschließen."¹²²

And hardly ever was Müller so ironic as in his comment on Hermann, where he renounced (in 1836, on the peak of their conflict) Hermann's approach as only comprehensible

"... wenn wir dabei manche aus der Kantischen Kategorieentafel abgeleitete Begriffsbestimmung beseitigen."¹²³

But the first place where Müller reintroduced Kant explicitly in the field from which the philosopher of rationality had been expelled, was in his *Prolegomena*. In the introduction he explained that the title of his book may be overweaning, especially since it "an ein philosophisches Werk von großer Bedeutung erinnert" and he would avoid a direct comparison between the two *Prolegomena*. Yet "etwas Aehnliches thue der Mythologie

Organismus unterordnete ...", *EMB* liii-liv. Eduard studied philology in Göttingen from Easter 1823 to 1826, and was drawn intimately into the life of his elder brother. Precisely Karl Otfrieds "determinism" was a point of disagreement between them.

¹²¹ K. O. Müller, review of Chr. Aug. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus sive de theologiae mysticae Graecorum causis libri III* (Königsberg 1829); published in *GGA* St. 13, 1830; *KDS* 2.54-69, 62. Cf. the quote from Burkert, at the beginning of this essay.

¹²² Review of Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, *ibid.* 69.

¹²³ K. O. Müller, review of *Acta Societatis Graecae*, A. Westermannus et C. H. Funkhaenel (eds.) Coll. III, vol. I. Praefatus est G. Hermannus s.l., s.a.; published in: *GGA* St. 169-171, 1836; *KDS* 1.7-19, here 11.

grade jetzt am meisten Noth"¹²⁴ for only a consistent critique would change the countless, idiosyncratic accounts into a scientific debate. By sorting out their similarities and differences at the end of the *Prolegomena*, he hoped to connect the approaches of his colleagues to his own system. Thus several aspects bear out the correspondence between the two *Prolegomena*.¹²⁵ First, both scholars began with the defense of an earlier work against critics, Kant in defense of his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781), Müller in defense of his *Orchomenos* and, more explicitly, *Die Dorier*. Second, each of them attempted to elevate a theme of general theoretical interest, related to the respective earlier work and in danger of falling into disrepute, to an academic level by taking criticisms into account and providing a reasoned system. While Müller's *Prolegomena* owed more to the *Urtheilskraft* in contents than in form, in its programmatic aims the analogy with Kant's *Prolegomena* was aptly chosen. Kant's metaphysical program was concerned with methods of reasoning and judgment, while Müller's mythological program was concerned with the methods of deriving historical information from mythology and its interpretation. To that end, he dealt in his *Prolegomena* with the faculties inherent in the human mind which have created myths and which one had to understand to shape scientific knowledge about them.

Müller began with an extrinsic definition of myth:

"Erzählungen von Handlungen und Schicksalen persönlicher Einzelwesen, welche nach ihrem Zusammenhange und ihrer Verflechtung insgesamt eine frühere, von der eigentlichen Geschichte Griechenlands ziemlich genau getrennte, Zeit betreffen."¹²⁶

The first insights must be derived from an understanding of this form: the narrative is an essential component, all phenomena are represented as persons, and events appear to have become detached from history. An understanding of this extrinsic form, however, is impossible without an intrinsic understanding, which is attained step by step. The real and the ideal are closely connected in myth; the degree to which they are interconnected

¹²⁴ *Prolegomena* v (emphasis added). Pflug, "Methodik und Hermeneutik" (*supra* n. 8) 130 reads Müller's dropping of the adjective "künftig" from Kant's title as indicating that Müller rejected an a priori basis for the meaning of myth.

¹²⁵ Pfeiffer, *Scholarship* (*supra* n. 2) 186, has connected the book with the *Prolegomena ad Homerum* by F. A. Wolf (1795). Yet a tribute of this kind to Wolf, whom Müller disliked so much, is highly unlikely. On the significance of Wolf's *Prolegomena* see also F. A. Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer*, 1795, tr. and ed. A. Grafton / G. W. Most / J. E. G. Zetzel (Princeton 1985). Burkert, "Griechische Mythologie" (*supra* n. 2) 164, and A. D. Momigliano, "K. O. Müller's *Prolegomena* zu einer Wissenschaftlichen Mythologie and the Meaning of 'Myth'", *AnnPisa* s. III, 14.3 (1983) 671-689, 671, have correctly identified Müller's reference to Kant. Momigliano limits the influence of Kant's *Prolegomena* to the title and to the influence of the Kantian Gottfried Hermann on Müller's ideas. The second inference seems to me unlikely; Müller did not need Hermann to be aware of Kant's work, nor can he be expected to defend his own views by Hermann's approach. The first inference may take Müller's modest reference to the affinity with Kant's work too literally.

¹²⁶ *Prolegomena* 59 (in the original spaced out).

is a gauge of the antiquity of the myth. This combination of experience and thought indicates that

“der mythische Ausdruck, der alle Wesen zu Personen und alle Beziehungen zu Handlungen macht, ein so eigenthümlicher [ist], daß wir zu seiner Ausbildung eine besondere Epoche der Cultur eines Volks annehmen müssen.”¹²⁷

Müller regards this mythical form of expression as a particular capacity that cannot be compared with anything else and certainly cannot be understood as allegory or lack of rationality.

“Wir haben hier mit einer Weltanschauung zu thun, die der unsern fremd ist, und in die es oft schwer hält sich hinein zu versetzen; den Grund derselben anzugeben, liegt der historischen Mythenforschung nicht ob; sie muß dies der höchsten aller geschichtlichen Wissenschaften, einer – in ihrem innern Zusammenhange kaum noch geahneten – Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes überlassen.”¹²⁸

Myth does not possess an a priori philosophical or symbolic meaning, but the mythopoetic capacity might be situated in a “künftige” history of the human mind. It is likely that here he did not think of the models Kant and Hegel had drawn, but instead of an overall and comparative interpretation of culturally specific histories.

To sum up the argument of the *Prolegomena*, Müller regards the origin of myth to lie in the mythopoetic capacity, which cannot be comprehended historically. Since in the last resort myths refer to themselves and provide the key to their own interpretation, mythology poses enormous hermeneutic problems to the researcher. But this mythopoetic “Stimmung des Gemüts” finds expression in contact with geographical and historical circumstances. This expression is certainly a historical object. This faculty further develops its creativity under specific circumstances, in a very early period and particularly during migrations. The origin of myths is therefore due to an interaction between this special mental faculty and the historical experiences of the people in question. Once they have emerged in this way in the early dawn of history, myths develop in contact with history. This can be seen, for instance, from the literary adaption which they undergo over the years, especially in Greece. Myths record the earliest experiences of a people in a specific way, and then become a part of cultural history in a wide sense. Many of the extant ancient testimonials reveal precisely such a modification of the original mythical core by later historical developments. It is the task of the student of mythology to investigate this historical development of myth. In this respect, it calls for a thorough knowledge of cultural history in order to be able to trace the development of the extrinsic form.

¹²⁷ *Prolegomena* 78.

¹²⁸ *Prolegomena* 121.

Since in the first and last instance myths are expressed in language, philological analysis, particularly etymology, is one of the most important methods for recovering the mythic core. However, the etymologist must concentrate on the language of the culture in question and avoid searching for foreign elements:¹²⁹ the myth, after all, is an expression of the historical experiences of the people that created it. Also important are the history of religion and familiarity with the geographical setting in which the people in question lived. The latter prerequisite bears on the need to connect the earliest version of a myth with a particular locality in order to understand which natural elements have been incorporated by the mythopoetic faculty. Given the linguistic character of myths, Müller attaches less importance to archaeological evidence in the work of the student of mythology. He regards the visual arts as derivatives of myth, and though they have value in themselves, they cannot serve as instruments for the investigation of the original meaning of the myth.

If once again we compare the work of Creuzer and Müller, the same fundamental elements are conspicuous: a Romantic receptivity to the experience of nature and speculative views on the human spirit, on the one hand; and the impact of historical approaches within philological *Altertumswissenschaft*, on the other. The main differences lie in the weight attached to these elements, exemplified in their conceptions of myth's relationship to history. While Creuzer held the symbol to be essential and the myth to be derivative, Müller treated them both as parts of the same expressive system. And while Creuzer emphasized the oriental world of ideas and the role of the priestly class in the creation of mythology, Müller saw every mythology as the historical and organic product of a single culture. In Creuzer's *Symbolik* the disciplinary approaches to the ancient texts were subordinated to his definition of myth; it was the original symbolism, taken to express the essence of the human spirit, which was to serve as a principle of arrangement and interpretation of the ancient texts. For Müller, the historical framework of the texts continued to function as the basis for the reconstruction of the mythopoetic moment. Creuzer's mythopoetic stage of culture had no clear-cut chronological contour and depended on his extremely vague speculative model. Müller tied the most important period in the creation of myth to a specific chronological setting: the period of migrations around the beginning of the first millennium B.C., a period whose historical character was difficult for the Greeks themselves to understand, but which certainly was a part of Greek cultural history in analytical terms. The mythopoetic faculty itself was external to history, but the myth that it produced was a part of history. Müller was therefore able to account for the characteristic of myth as a phenomenon which belongs

¹²⁹ This consequence of his axioms explains why Müller applied mainly the historical linguistics of Greek to his researches and hardly ever looked for external or comparative roots in his analysis of Greek myths.

simultaneously to two worlds, past and history, what has been thought ("das Gedachte") and what has happened ("das Geschehene").

After reading the *Prolegomena*, K. H. W. Völcker (1798-1841) wrote to Müller:

"So wird Ihr Buch den unendlichen Nutzen bringen, daß es den Leuten verständigt, was die Vernünftigen unter Mythologie verstehen; es wird jene Verwechslungen und das Ineinermischen alles Mythologischen in Eins verhüten; es wird in den Köpfen der Antisymboliker selbst erst Licht schaffen;¹³⁰ es bringt J e d e m vieles zur inneren Klarheit, wessen er sich nur dunkel bewußt war; es stellt zuerst die Grundsätze einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie auf, wenn eigentlich bisher Jeder s e i n e Mythologie hatte ... Ich bin begierig, welchen Einfluß es sich auf die Literatur verschaffen wird."¹³¹

Völcker had understood what Müller had meant to do: not to cut the Gordian knot, but to unravel and then tie it again in a different way. But the effect of the *Prolegomena* turned out to be almost the reverse. Müller's mythopoetic soul was still too mystical for the current "wissenschaftliche" philology, while on the other hand Müller's call for systematicity and facts was used as an argument to drive Romantic idealism from the academic field. After the 1840's, the paths of inquiry diverged: the predominantly rationalist approach to history and myth was seized upon by universities and other research centers, while the interest in phenomena beneath the surface of history, labelled speculative and unorthodox by its opponents, languished beyond the academic pale.¹³² In this way, the difference between history and the past was reflected in the character of research itself and in the manner in which it was organized. Yet it may be clear by now that Müller's Romantic Pietism prevented his unambiguous siding with rationalism. Though he set himself off against Creuzer's a priori explications, he could not visualize the study of myth without accepting divine inspiration.

Conclusions

"Ich glaube, Hermann's Vorzug ist die sicherere und festere Methode, Creuzer's die religiöse und tiefe Auffassung."¹³³ Thus Müller wrote to Ludwig Schorn (1793-1842) in an initial response to the debate on the *Symbolik*. He was aware that the current views tended to conceptualize the

¹³⁰ That is, illuminate to those who had criticized Creuzer on behalf of the Enlightenment, what myth really is about.

¹³¹ *AW-Br.* no. 36 (5 May 1825) 48.

¹³² Burkert, "Griechische Mythologie" (*supra* n. 2) 162-163 continues his survey, quoted at the beginning of this article as follows: "... also wendet sich die Philologie hinweg von der Mythologie ... 1926 urteilte dann freilich Ernst Howald, dass der 'Sieg des Rationalismus über die Romantik ... die Klassische Philologie aus dem Kreise der lebendigen und auf die Gesamtkultur wirkenden Wissenschaften gerissen hat'." Cited is Howald, *Der Kampf* (*supra* n. 65) 22.

¹³³ *Br. Schorn* 300; cf. Pflug, "Methodik und Hermeneutik" (*supra* n. 8) 124.

issue in opposites: history versus philology; history versus symbol; history versus *Naturphilosophie*; method versus "Anschauung". What he himself wanted was a history built on what he held to be the vital core of culture, and a methodology which allowed the historian to create this whole in a scientific way. Often redressing his earlier steps, he tried to work toward an integration of religious, Romantic *Geist* and historical philology. When in 1820 Müller summarized in a letter to Tieck what was to him the core of scholarship,

"romantische Poesie, Naturphilosophie, Konstruktion der Geschichte"¹³⁴

he recalled the development of his own mind.

The "Konstruktion der Geschichte" remained the least secure part. His historical perceptions developed gradually from his Berlin years onwards, and never achieved the same self-evident quality as had the nucleus of nature-religion-feeling which he shared with Creuzer, even if his reading of the *Symbolik* had helped him to distinguish between Creuzer's conceptions of myth and history, and his own.¹³⁵ This uncertainty can be explained in two ways. Psychologically, it may be rather obvious that no mental acquirement settles itself as deeply in one's sense of self as the emotional climate of one's youth. But the current meanings of 'history' may be adduced as a rather significant factor.

Ancient history was the field par excellence where the new questions of historiography were investigated. The importance of classical studies was not only due to the idealization of Greece which reshaped the traditional authority of antiquity in European culture. Situated at the crossroads of religion, history, and the development of the human mind, Greek mythology was held to shed light on the origins of civilization. The appreciation of language as both the creation of history and the entry into it, mainly had its wellsprings in the study of the ancient languages. So even if in a temporal sense the word 'history' distinguished between the period extending from the early Middle Ages to *Zeitgeschichte*, covered by historians (often trained as classicists), and ancient history, covered predominantly by classical philologists, the study of ancient history formed the backbone of history in a wider sense. Indeed, the word 'history' now increasingly implied a way of thought, claimed to be the ultimate referent of the humanities. Here lies one of the major differences between Müller and Böckh: to the latter, history in the end served to understand the texts; to Müller, the texts served to understand history.

As far as Müller embodied this new historical ideal, his position illuminates its inherent tensions. The Romantic force invigorating historicism had a centrifugal effect. Designating the emotional, human soul as the origin of culture, *and* creating the essential otherness of the past, it

¹³⁴ Müller to Tieck, *G-Br.* no. 19 (17 July 1820) 28.

¹³⁵ On the final response of Creuzer to Müller, see the other half of my diptych (*supra* n. 1).

moved the first out of reach in terms of the second. The speculative approach mediated this disjunction by subsuming historical difference to the philosophy of the mind; to put it bluntly, it sacrificed the otherness and variety of the past to the universality of the human mind. Thus, exemplified by Schelling and Hegel, 'history' was made synonymous with a 'philosophy of history' which revived several eighteenth-century conceptions. Müller, however, saw the human soul as effective *within* historical variety, and he could not reconcile himself to idealist philosophical history. Hermeneutics, the method suited to the new historicism, helped the philologist to understand the historical other, and to this extent promised an alternative to philosophical history. But here a second tension reveals itself. The connection between the mind of the historical other and its context could be constructed more convincingly in the case of individual authors than with peoples and periods. Since in principle it refused to presuppose the quality of a historical epoch but instead aimed at understanding a historical phenomenon through its own development, historicist hermeneutics would not recognize the inspiration of "Sinne und Seele" that Müller saw as the ultimate key to cultural history. To put it bluntly once more, historicism in its aim to become scientific would sacrifice the human soul to historical variety. This Müller was unwilling to do. Forced to negotiate between his views on the human soul, which had first found shelter in *Naturphilosophie*, and "Konstruktion der Geschichte", he saw the necessity of mitigating the impact of *Naturphilosophie* as an all-encompassing worldview and limiting its supposed place in the development of human history. But he could not let go of his ideas on the human mind itself – its religious creativity in response to nature – which were the product of his Pietist Romanticism. The *Prolegomena* acknowledge the rift between *Geist* and history, explaining why and how the nexus between them is found particularly in mythopoesis. He showed how the analysis of myths could comply with the current ideas of scientific historiography, but underscored as well why true historical understanding required an inevitable speculative leap.¹³⁶

Finally, a third tension may be discerned in his phrase "Konstruktion der Geschichte". He used these words to Tieck after finishing the *Aeginetica*

¹³⁶ In spite of his lucid discussion of Müller's position, I cannot agree with Pflug, "Methodik und Hermeneutik" (*supra* n. 8) 358, that Müller's theory came out of a basically eighteenth-century fear of the hermeneutic circle. Hermeneutics could not commit itself to the kind of philosophical assumptions Müller just refused to give up. Pflug is right that Müller's work contributed to the positivist identity of classical studies in the second half of the nineteenth century, by his rebuttal of the philosophical systems and his search for facts on which the study of myth could rest. Yet what Müller regarded as facts, for a long time failed to be counted as such. The association of Müller with positivism was only possible by discarding the speculative element in his work. This may have been due to the recurrent distrust of Romanticism in academic classicism and the gradual dechristianization of scholarship. One of the most striking features of the work on Müller is the total lack of interest in his religiosity, apart from the unavoidable allusion that he was a "Pfarrersohn". Momigliano, "Etruscheria" (*supra* n. 3) 303-304, even points to "a religious orientation which was curiously little declared for a man of such origin."

and *Orchomenos*, and they imply that he was acutely aware of his own activity in creating history. Surely, this awareness was inherent to the hermeneutic approach and it indicated the effort which the writing of history demanded of him, augmented by the tensions just mentioned. All the same, it has often been observed that in his writing Müller combined a strong belief in his opinions with a remarkable discretion concerning the validity of his interpretations. The first attitude was very common in the mentality of his profession; the second not at all. Both contemporary and later critics have explained this modesty by pointing out the gentleness of Müller's character and his reluctance to enter into acrid polemics, except when in defense of his friends. Yet his individual nature cannot fully account for the difference between the fervour of his convictions and the prudence with which he as a rule offered his conclusions. It is tempting to make a connection between Müller's words to Tieck, his professional attitude and his views on language. His sensitivity to the autonomous power of language is revealed throughout his work, from his youthful comments on the difference in immediacy between poetry and historiography¹³⁷ to his captivation by Böckh's views. "Konstruktion der Geschichte" might infer that Müller took this position to its consequence, and one may wonder if he did so consciously. If the language of the Greeks is not transparent ("Pforte") but a cultural entity ("Quelle") in its own right, the same holds true for the language of the one who writes on the Greeks. The text of the historian, then, is in the first and the last resort a testimony to his own culture. In between, as Müller would often assert, one might hope to come as close as possible to the past, but one could never really disclose it.¹³⁸ In brief, it seems that Müller came to see his own historical writing as a linguistic statement about the past rather than as a reconstruction of the past, transmitted by language. This position implied a marked difference with the current ideals of historiography, which were based on the transparency of language in the historical text.¹³⁹ To Müller, there was a large distance between "wirklich Schauen" and "blos zeigen". He never called himself a historian.

¹³⁷ In 1822, he set up a society of intellectuals who translated literature from other cultures into German, called the "ungründliche" – unprofound.

¹³⁸ *EMB* xxxvi.

¹³⁹ F. R. Ankersmit, *The Reality Effect in the Writing of History. The Dynamics of Historiographical Topology* [KNAW n.s. vol. 52, no. 1] (Amsterdam / New York 1989) 6-10.