

TWO POEMS

F.W.J. Schelling

Translators' Introduction

1. Context

From the moment that Schelling was appointed Extraordinary Professor of Philosophy at the University of Jena in July 1798, his life became increasingly enmeshed in the Jena Romantic circle. During the latter months of 1799, Schelling, A.W. Schlegel, Caroline Schlegel, Friedrich Schlegel and Dorothea Veit all worked closely and took meals together. Here Schelling was at the heart of the Romantic movement.¹

Jena Romanticism in 1799 was in crisis. It had begun to move away from the literary criticism that marked its origins towards a fascination with the religious and the mystical.² In Spring 1799, Schleiermacher published his Speeches on Religion to its Cultural Despisers,

¹ During this period, he also spent much time in the company of Goethe (indeed, it was Goethe's influence which had finally landed him the job in Jena). For the Goethean context to Schelling's poems, see Jeremy Adler, 'Science, Philosophy and Poetry in the Dialogue between Goethe and Schelling' in Elinor S. Schaffer (ed.), The Third Culture: Literature and Science (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 66-104; Robert J. Richards, The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002), Chapter 3; and Liliane Weissberg, 'Weimar and Jena: Goethe and the New Philosophy' in Walter Hinderer (ed), Goethe und das Zeitalter Romantik (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2002), 163-74.

² The backdrop to this transition is the atheism controversy which engulfed the University of Jena in 1799 and ultimately led to Fichte's departure. For further details, see Yolanda Estes and Curtis Bowman (eds), Fichte and the Atheism Dispute (1798-1800) (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

calling on anyone interested in the ‘intuition of the universe’ to take religious material seriously. One figure who took up this call was Novalis who during October penned his apology for medieval Christianity, Europa or Christendom: A Fragment in which (at least on a conventional reading) he idealizes an organic social hierarchy, benign absolutism and the role of universal, unquestioned faith as social cement.

In the Winter of 1799, Schelling seems to have experienced a violent reaction towards this religionization of Romanticism. Friedrich Schlegel summarizes Schelling’s feelings in a letter to Schleiermacher:

On [Novalis] you have had an immense effect. He has read us an essay on Christianity and given it for [our journal] the Athenäum . . . While [Novalis] is so ferociously intent on continuing with your being [i.e. the project of the Speeches], Schelling has suffered a new attack of his old enthusiasm for irreligion, of which I fully approve. He has dispatched an Epicurean confession of faith in the manner of Goethe’s Hans Sachs.³

Schlegel makes clear that Schelling’s ‘Epicurean confession’—a poem whose full title is Heinz Widerporst’s Epicurean Confession of Faith—was intended as an attack on Schleiermacher and Novalis and, as we shall see, it is indeed a biting satire on their penchant for religion in the name of a very explicit materialist atheism. As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy

³ Friedrich Schlegel, ‘Letter to Schleiermacher, 1799’, quoted in Luigi Pareyson (ed), Schellingiana Rariora (Torino: Erasmo, 1977), 86-7. What Schlegel means by Schelling’s ‘old enthusiasm for irreligion’ is difficult to determine: at Tübingen with Hegel and Hölderlin Schelling had taken up the role of a Jacobin attacking the conservative orthodoxies of the Stift (he was, in legend at least, the first to translate the Marseillaise into German). But it is unlikely Schlegel would have known of this adolescent rebellion and it is more likely that Schlegel is here interpreting Schelling’s early works on Naturphilosophie in an atheistic manner.

put it, ‘It represented a reaction—which Caroline and Friedrich shared—to Schleiermacher’s Discourses on Religion as well as to Novalis’ religious direction in Europe, or Christianity and, generally, to the climate of religiosity that had become dominant within the Jena group.’⁴

Friedrich planned to print Schelling’s ‘Epicurean confession’ as an anonymous companion piece to Novalis’ Europa in the next issue of the Athenäum⁵, but was prevented from implementing his idea by the circumspection of his brother and also Goethe. Goethe in particular insisted that it would put Schelling’s position at the University of Jena at risk.⁶ Thus, Schelling—despite residing at the heart of the Romantic circle—never published alongside the other Jena Romantics and Heinz Widerporst remained unknown until it was published in his first biography in 1869 (although Schelling did think enough of it to publish a small fragment in 1800).⁷

However, this controversy over the publication of Heinz Widerporst was not enough to dissuade Schelling from poetry. In January 1800 Friedrich Schlegel is again writing to Schleiermacher of Schelling’s poetic projects:

Schelling is quite full of his poem, and I believe it will be something great. Until now he has only made a study and tries to learn stanzas and terza rima. He will probably choose the latter for the whole thing. I am reading Dante with him and Caroline, and

⁴ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism, trans. Philip Bernard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 79.

⁵ This would have been a prime example of symphilosophy in practice.

⁶ See Fuhrmans’ conjecture in F.W.J. Schelling, Briefe und Dokumente, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Bonn: Bouvier, 1968-75), 1:205.

⁷ Specifically, lines 184-249 appeared under the title ‘Something further on the Relation of Naturphilosophie to Idealism.’ See F.W.J. Schelling, Werke, ed. K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856-61), 4:546-8.

we are already over halfway through: when he gets into something, he goes overboard. I have still seen nothing more than thirteen stanzas which he wrote at Christmas for Caroline (with whom he gets on very well indeed) as an announcement of his work.⁸

Schlegel here announces in no uncertain terms that during the Winter of 1799/1800 Schelling was undertaking a long poem, of such ambition that Schlegel was convinced of its future merit. Nothing survives of the ‘great’ poem Schelling was so full of in January 1800 other than the ‘thirteen stanzas’ Schlegel mentions. These were first printed by Schelling’s early biographer, Plitt, and subsequently given the title, ‘The Heavenly Image’, by K.F.A. Schelling.⁹

2. Content

Heinz Widerporst’s Epicurean Confession of Faith consists in a vigorous polemic against religion. The character ‘Heinz Widerporst’ is a creation of the sixteenth-century poet, Hans Sachs, whose legacy had recently been revived by Goethe. ‘Widerporst’ is derived from the German adjective, widerborstig, stubborn: Widerporst is his own man and refuses to be caught up in the growing hysteria for other-worldliness. ‘Epicurean’ is to be taken in its popular meaning of common sense hedonism, for Widerporst’s diatribe against religion is

⁸ G.L. Plitt, Aus Schellings Leben in Briefen (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1869), 1:289; partially translated in Richards 160. The reference to Schelling and Caroline ‘getting on very well indeed’ is one of the first indications of their burgeoning romance. ‘The Heavenly Image’ is, in addition to anything else, a love poem addressed to Caroline. By Spring 1800, their relationship was the talk of Jena; in 1803 they were married.

⁹ Plitt 1:289; Schelling, *Werke*, 10:447. Adler conjectures that The Heavenly Image was to relate to the great speculative epic, rather like Goethe’s Dedication to Faust relates to the main body of that work (79).

founded (initially at least) upon a commonsensical and anti-intellectualist affirmation of worldly pleasures. The poem issues in a raucous and bawdy declaration of the joys of this life over the next.

Schelling explicitly singles out Schleiermacher and Novalis as the two theorists responsible for the turn to religion in recent thought (line 24). Hence, Novalis' nostalgic vision of medieval Christianity is relentlessly parodied (lines 83-106) and Schleiermacher too is attacked in a passage that plays on the etymology of his surname ('maker of veils') (lines 250-91). However, it needs to be borne in mind that Heinz Widerporst is not only an anti-theological poem. Amidst the satire and polemic, there is a vein of serious philosophical speculation.¹⁰ In particular, Schelling's own brand of Naturphilosophie is not only resumed, but also developed further than in many of his other works of the period.

The Heavenly Image forms the dedication to an epic poem which was never written—and, as such, following a Goethean model, makes a number of generalized claims about the eternal and creative power of love. It stands very much in the tradition of sublimated love poetry and uses the vocabulary of a neoplatonic, Christian inheritance which identifies love with ascent towards the sun and the heavens. The poem follows the lover as he purifies himself from worldly things and moves closer to the primordial power of the universe. As this also suggests, Dante is an imposing presence in the poem—both in terms of meter and in terms of the imagery of celestial ascent through love. Most evident is Dante's figuration of Beatrice as spur and guide: this supplies both the title of the poem and its central image of an angelic lover inciting the hero upwards.

3. Form

¹⁰ This is explored in the accompanying essay by Whistler.

Schelling follows Goethe in selecting Knittelvers as the most appropriate meter for transposing poetry styled after Hans Sachs into the late eighteenth century. Heinz Widerporst is thus written entirely in Knittelvers and so is composed of rhyming couplets (apart from an unrhymed line, line 121) with a loose meter of four stressed syllables a line (any number of unstressed syllables are possible and Schelling ranges between 6 and 12 syllables in total). This ‘low’ meter is, of course, intended to mirror the folkish nature of the poem—pillorying priests and ascetics in the name of sausage, wine and pretty girls. Our translation has attempted to preserve the free, almost anarchic nature of the meter as well as the exuberance of the rhymes by employing unmetered lines of rhyming couplets.

The Heavenly Image, by contrast, adheres strictly to Terzinen form—the German equivalent of terza rima. The model of Dante is once more the motivation behind this choice. As such, The Heavenly Image is composed of 8 line stanzas of iambic pentameter employing a rhyme scheme of two repeated alternate rhymes and a couplet (ABABABCC). The strictures of Terzinen seem to have, on occasion, been too much for Schelling: his rhymes (lines 63/64, 97/99/101 especially), as well as meaning, suffer as a result. Considering English’s more flexible approach to rhythm, we have for the most part sacrificed a strictly iambic meter in order to preserve Schelling’s meaning and rhyme scheme.

4. A Note on the Texts

Despite its belated discovery, Heinz Widerporst has been widely printed in German; this translation follows the critical edition from Luigi Pareyson (ed.), Schellingiana Rariora (Torino: Erasmo, 1977), 86-98. English translations of small fragments of Heinz Widerporst can be found in David Farrell Krell, The Tragic Absolute (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2005), 16 and Robert J. Richards, The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the

Age of Goethe (Chicago: Uo Chicago P, 2002), 103-4. The translators' notes are for the most part dependent on Pareyson's annotations. The Heavenly Image has been almost entirely neglected in Schelling scholarship. It is briefly discussed in Xavier Tilliette, Schelling: Biographie (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1999), 89; Hans Kunz, Schellings Gedichte und dichterische Pläne (Zurich: Juris, 1955), 59-63; and Jeremy Adler, 'The Aesthetics of Magnetism: Science, Philosophy and Poetry in the Dialogue Between Goethe and Schelling' in Elinor S. Shaffer (ed), The Third Culture: Literature and Science (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 79-81 (which provides a prose English translation of the first few stanzas). Haym discusses The Heavenly Image, but oddly considers it a Christmas gift to Auguste (Caroline's daughter) rather than Caroline herself: Rudolf Haym, Die romantische Schule (Berlin: Gärtner, 1870), 635. Our translation follows G.L. Plitt, Aus Schellings Leben in Briefen (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1869), 1:289-92.

Heinz Widerporst's Epicurean Confession of Faith

1 I cannot bear it any longer,
But must rise again to lash out stronger;
Once more stir up all my senses
Which've gradually lost their defenses
5 To all those high, otherworldly screechings
Through which they force me to accept their teachings;
I must again become one of our own—
Made up of just blood, flesh, marrow, bone.
I just don't know how they can compose
10 All these endless pieces of religious prose;
I don't like to brood on it for an age,
Instead I will attack them in a rage.
So, to stop these spirits of high-standing
From blocking my words and my understanding,
15 In response, at this very moment I insist
That the only real and true things to exist
Are what one can feel with one's hand,
Not things you can only understand
Through mortification, suffering and fasts
20 'Till you wish for release from your body at last.

When they spoke so defiantly of it, it's true,
I was taken aback and had to think things through;

I read, as if I really knew,
 The Speeches and the Fragment too.¹¹
 25 I'd have readily given such things the nod,
 Renouncing work and life without God;
 I hoped to mock evil, so thereby
 Make myself a god up high,
 And I had already immersed my soul
 30 In the intuition of the universal whole¹²,
 When my native wit reminded me
 That I was as good as lost at sea,
 That down the old tracks should I crawl
 And be nobody's fool.
 35 I was not idle about following this call;
 But did not become straight like old Saul,
 I had to dispel whims of the kind
 That had once upset my mind,
 And relearn my body how to walk
 40 By sending for as much wine as pork—
 All of which proved very worthwhile.
 When I had regained my old style,
 Out of women I could get a rise,
 See brightly out of both eyes;

¹¹ Translators' Note. 'Speeches' refers to Schleiermacher's Speeches on Religion to its Cultural Despisers and 'Fragment' to Novalis' Christianity or Europa: A Fragment.

¹² Translators' Note. 'Intuition of the universe' is the central concept in Schleiermacher's Speeches.

45 And having had my fill of things to taste and bite,
 At once I sat down to write.

I gave myself this brief:

Do not falter in that belief

Which helped you through fair and foul weather

50 And held your body and soul together,
 Even though it's not susceptible of proof
 Nor reducible to conceptual truth.

How they speak of the inner light!

They talk a lot and prove nothing outright,

55 They fill your ears with great speeches
 About something that just falls to pieces,
 That looks like poetry or hallucination,
 But is, in fact, all poesy's negation.¹³

They say nothing of themselves besides

60 What they feel within and bear inside.

Thus I intend to further confess

My creed to which all may acquiesce,

As I feel it burn within my frame,

As it swells in every vein:

65 In evil hours and in good, I have been
 Happy with myself and contented within,
 For it has slowly dawned on me

¹³ Translators' Note. In line 56, 'poetry' translates 'Dichtung' whereas 'poesy' in line 57 translates 'Poesie'.

That matter is the only certainty,
 It protects and guides everything, large or small,
 70 Is righteous father to all,
 It is the element to which all thinking does tend;
 For all knowledge, the beginning and end.
 I don't worry about the invisible too much,
 Instead I remain with what I can see and touch:
 75 What I can smell, taste and feel,
 So all my senses grasp what's real.
 Let my one religion be
 To love a pretty knee
 And breasts so full and hips so slim,
 80 Flowers from which sweet smells overbrim,
 All pleasures full of nourishment,
 All loves sweet with encouragement.
 This is why, should one religion still exist¹⁴
 (Though from it all I personally could desist),
 85 Out of all that are around
 Only Catholicism could break me down:
 As it was in the good old days,
 Without all the quarrels, without all the frays;
 When in hard times and in good all were One,
 90 Catholics didn't look to distant climes for fun,
 Nor did they at heaven gape,

¹⁴ Translators' Note. Lines 83-106 are usually read as a parody of Novalis' Europa.

But still for God they all went ape,
Believed the earth was at the center of a universal dome
And at the center of the earth was Rome,
95 Where the chief resided
And the holiest scepter presided,
And there lived the parsons with all and sundry
Together, as in milk-and-honey country.
And in the house high up in the sky
100 The same people lived such luxury, whereby
They held a daily wedding fete
Between the virgins and their wizened old mates;
And at home the wife would scream and shout
And reign supreme, as happens hereabout.
105 I'd have laughed at this 'till my sides split,
While also getting much use out of it.
But events have now moved on apace;
It is a scandal, it is a disgrace
That now it is seasonable
110 For everything to be so very reasonable,
It is comme il faut to strut around with right and wrong,
And make a parade of fine speeches at the throng;
At every turn, even the youths
Are clipped with virtue's truths,
115 And one Catholic brother
Is as good as any other.

So all religion have I renounced and quit;
To none of them will I commit.
I go neither to church nor to hear the priest talk sweetly,
120 Have finished with all faith completely,
Except that one religion which rules within,
Leads me to sense and the poetic word,
Daily my heart is stirred
At its eternal instigation,
125 Its perpetual transformation
Without peace or delay.
It is a secret all can survey,
A poem that never dies,
Which speaks to my nose, ears, eyes,
130 So that I can no longer believe nor attest
But what this religion plants in my breast,
Nor is anything just or secure
But what its revelations make sure;
For in its features so deeply wrought
135 What is true must needs be sought;
The false ought never to seep its way in
And certainly never emerge from within;
Through forms and images my faith is revealed
And does not stay inside and concealed.
140 So that from the ciphers that lie to hand
We might solve the mystery and thereby understand

Without recourse to anything real
Except what our fingers are able to feel.
This is why if there's one religion I mustn't mock,
145 It would be found in mosses, rock,
Flowers and all things that are there
And which press forth into light and air;
It reveals itself in depths and heights,
These are the hieroglyphs it writes.
150 Before the cross I'd happily bend down prone,
If there were a mountain I could be shown
On which, for Christians' edification,
A temple emerged—purely of nature's creation—
On top of which shining towers rise
155 With magnetized bells of a great size,
And on the altars, in the great halls
Crystal crucifixes grace the walls,
Capuchins stand still as stone
Parading with everything vergers might own,
160 In chasubles fringed with gold
With silver chalices and ostensories to hold.

However, up until the present time
No one has heard such bells chime,
And so I will not lose my thread
165 But will persist in godlessness instead,

Until someone is sent my way
Who makes faith as plain as day—
Although I doubt he would.
Therefore, I intend to hold good
170 Until the Last Judgment is upon me,
Which no one else will live to see.
I believe the world exists eternally
And will never decompose internally;
For I'd like to know when it would
175 Burn all its shrubbery and wood,
And how they'd try to get hell hot
So as to cook up sinners in a pot.
I am delivered from fear's control,
I can now heal body and soul;
180 Instead of throwing about my arms
Losing myself in the universe's charms,
I immerse myself in the bright, deep hue
Of my beloved's eyes so blue.
I don't know why the world should make me frown,
185 Since I know it all the way down:
It's an animal who is docile and meek
Who never shows us a threatening streak;
There are laws with which it has to agree
And so it lies before me peacefully.
190 Within it, a giant-spirit has grown,

But all its senses have been turned to stone;
It cannot escape from its tight shell
Nor break out of its iron cell,
Although it is often stirred to flight:
195 To extend and move onwards with might.
In what is living and even what has died
It struggles towards consciousness with active strides.
This explains how all things appear,
For it swells up and makes them persevere;
200 This force, through which metals sprout,
Which forces trees in spring to fill out,
Which searches in all depths and heights
For what turns out towards the light,
Which struggles on and spares no pains
205 But now shoots up to higher domains
Stretching out its limbs yet further,
Before now shortening them together,
Twisting and turning it desperately tries
To find the right shape, form and size.
210 And struggling thus with its fingers and toes
Against that resistant element to which it's opposed,
It learns to live in a small space
In which its senses are first put in place;
It's but a dwarf: enclosed tight,
215 Finely formed and upright,

Named the son of man in the past,
The giant-spirit finds itself at last.
From a deep sleep and a long dream
He awakes to scarcely recognize how he seems,
220 He looks at himself with marvel and pleasure,
Eyes wide open, he examines and takes measure;
He would like to quickly with all his senses
Melt back into nature's expanses,
But he has now fallen away
225 And cannot flow back as he did yesterday;
Instead, small and enclosed must he stand
Alone in his own vast land.
Fearful that frightening dreams might foretell
The giant plucking up its courage to rebel,
230 And like the first god of the golden age
Devouring its own children in a rage.
He fails to realize that he and the giant are the same,
For he has forgotten his previous names,
And torments himself with ghosts of the dead.
235 And yet he could say to himself instead:
I am the deity who nourishes within
The spirit which moves what is and what's been.
From the early struggles the dark force induces
Past the gush of primordial life-juices,
240 Through which matter and force swell out,

And the first blossoms and buds sprout,
 Up until the first beam of a newly-born light
 That, like a second creation, breaks through the night,
 And that for the world's thousand eyes,
 245 Like day does night, illuminates the skies;
 And at last dwelling within the youthful power of thought,
 Through which nature recreates itself from naught,
 As one power, one pulse, one life,
 Restriction and expansion's one continual strife.¹⁵

250 For this reason there is nothing that I do detest
 More than a foreign, if distinguished guest,
 Who struts about from North to South
 With evil speeches in his mouth
 About the essence of the natural sphere;
 255 Who esteems himself so very dear.
 These men derive from a distinct new race
 With a special sense and spiritual grace;
 They consign all others to a damned fate
 And have sworn an eternal oath of hate
 260 Against matter's works and existence;
 Pictures strengthen their resistance
 And they speak on religion as on a female

¹⁵ Translators' Note. In the manuscripts, an alternative text exists for lines 248-9: 'As one power, one interplay and weaving, / A drive and impulse towards a life always increasing.'

Whom one ought only to gaze at through a veil¹⁶
 So as to prevent any sensuous allusion.

265 They produce verbal confusion,
 Feel themselves all-mighty and a cut above,
 And believe their members to have grown large from love,
 Carrying the new Messiah still unborn
 Who—elected by their decree—is sworn

270 To lead all the poor men
 Great and small into a pen
 Where they stop teasing and having fun,
 But in a nice and Christian manner appear as One,
 And they do anything else which is dubbed prophetic.

275 They are, indeed, by nature non-magnetic,
 Although if they happen to touch a spirit who is true
 And feel his power within them accrue,
 They believe that they have brought about this existence
 To now point North without assistance.

280 But their spirits are so very slack
 That they can only speak of others' acts;
 They understand how to shake and befuddle,
 To leave all our thoughts in a muddle,
 And think thereby they make spirits rich,

285 But all that happens is that noses itch,
 Stomachs are polemically upset

¹⁶ Translators' Note. 'durch Schleier schauen': a pun on Schleiermacher.

And appetites are never whet.
 I advise anyone who has read it,
 So as to heal their corrupted spirit,
 290 To take a beautiful girl aside
 And in her the meaning of Lucinde¹⁷ confide.

 However, to all of them and their kind,
 I will make known, and not stay resigned,
 That against their sanctity and piety,
 295 Their superior sense and otherworldly society,
 I will scandalize intently all life long
 As long as I can still hold on
 To the worship of matter and light
 And to German poetry's fundamental might.
 300 So long as I cling to those two sweet eyes upon her face,
 So long as I feel myself in the embrace
 Of arms that promise admiration,
 And by her lips am given consolation,
 Her melody resonating in key,
 305 Her life penetrating into me,
 Then I can only strive for what's true,
 All smoke and shimmer I will pierce through,
 Then no thoughts in my head
 Could flicker here and there like ghosts of the dead.

¹⁷ Translators' Note. Friedrich Schlegel's scandalous novel published in 1799.

310 They would instead have nerves, blood, marrow and flesh,
 And would be born free, strong and fresh.

 But to the others I am still polite
 And add, so as to conclude aright:

 Let the devil and saltpeter fall

315 On Russians¹⁸ and Jesuits all.

 This text was written in Frau Venus' nest
 Where I, Heinz Widerporst, have confessed;
 The second called by such a name,
 God give us still many seeds the same.¹⁹

¹⁸ Translators' Note. The attack on Russians here is seemingly a reference to the Russophile playwright, August von Kotzebue, whose burlesque, 'The Tower of Babel', satirising the Jena and Weimar intellectual scene, was performed at Weimar on New Year's Eve 1799. See further Tilliette, Schelling: Une Biographie, 95.

¹⁹ Translators' Note. These last lines reference the opening of Novalis' collection of fragments, Pollen (otherwise known as Miscellaneous Observations), the epigraph to which likewise call for a harvesting of seeds.

The Heavenly Image: Lines to Caroline, Christmas 1799

1 The bosom of the earth lies numb and cold;
 All outer pleasures wither, one by one.
 Solely the magic which out of us flowed
 Now turns back stronger to where it'd begun.

5 Most of the blooms from which our love did grow
 Are transformed in the gaze of inner sun,
 So that, being deceived by its brightness,
 We are caressed by fair heaven's mildness

 Towards which every loving heart strains.

10 But only a few are bestowed this bliss,
 For within any heart, in which love reigns
 And which feeds this fire in holy stillness,
 There one discovers all of nature's gains.
 This heart is granted its boldest wish;

15 Glorious things—for which most only strive—
 Are already found in the wreath of life.

 For glory is only within us born;
 The divine is given through free donation.
 From the beginning most are lost, forlorn,

20 And must leave the world without vocation.
 But fate will choose: whoever's lot is drawn
 And pulled into light from night's dominion
 Is lifted aloft from the paths they tread
 And soon heaven opens above their head.

25 A beam from the seat of unborn desire
 Opens up his chest with a wild thrust,
 Lets in eternal striving and holy fire,
 The highest pain and the highest lust.
 Since all in life comes from what is higher,

30 There floats down to him who exults and trusts
 On the dewy feathers of golden mist
 Poetic powers as blessing and gift.

 As fire's strength is just to set alight
 And is not kindled by an inner source;

35 So with creative power must love be bound tight
 Before, by its own flame, it becomes a corpse.
 Eternal love can only then ignite
 In those love also grants poetry's force;

 It speaks forth the eternity of things

40 From which creation and destruction spring.

 So do please listen, O Life of my Life,

To that which inside my bosom rings true:

‘Not in vain did your heart’s spark come alive,

Glowing within as that first power grew;

45 Nor in vain did holy love and bliss strive

To descend from heaven itself to you.

To such heights has the highest force bar none

With free grace raised you up, unworthy one.

‘Upon it do your heart’s life-forces feed,

50 They rock further back to gain a higher lift,

So on that man who should accomplish great deeds

Great deeds are then bestowed like a free gift.

He must o’erleap many rungs and proceed

To covet that from which he’s cast adrift,

55 Attain heaven, fired by thirst for the light,

Then descend and unseal eternal night.

‘To dissolve the spell of our unknown binds

Which keeps us captivated and in chains

Demands a lot of all mortal mankind,

60 Excepting that man who loves this refrain:

“To bring evil’s ultimate ground to mind,

The abyss must be approached and made plain;²⁰
 He can attain the ground of good and right
 If he dares ascend to the source of light.”

65 ‘Hence you are obliged to recast and rend
 Yourself, so from danger you will not feign.
 For you have now chosen the highest end
 Towards which thousands have striven in vain;
 To find your fated path I recommend:
 70 Look East towards a star that shines again.
 What through your own power you can’t attain
 By love’s own power you can and will gain.’

 Heavenly image, haste into the unknown!
 Marking out for the hesitant the way,
 75 Pointing out to him sunny stepping stones
 Which lead to truth but form a fraught pathway.
 At night, a herald may approach alone
 Dressed in the garments of heaven’s noonday;
 And when the powers within him decline
 80 Then will you hurl downwards your fiery sign

²⁰ Translators’ Note. The invocation of the abyss or Ungrund in The Heavenly Image has often led to it being misdated to 1809 – that is, to the period of Schelling’s middle philosophy when the notion of the Ungrund takes centre-stage. See Hans Kunz, Schellings Gedichte und dichterische Pläne (Zürich: Juris, 1955), 58.

Which—appearing—gave him hope at that time,
 When he loved you from afar, hopelessly.
 If you then see his powers still decline,
 Call out into his heart: You have loved me.

85 If his courage is to ashes consigned,
 Say: I have loved you. And so let him see
 That in these words reside a life sublime:
 To fly up to the highest, furthest climes.

When in sacred hours oft given to bed
 90 I choose what is holy from a free urge,
 You are by a god to my spirit wed,
 Eternally, beautifully, together forged.
 Though no soft song will tell the world ahead
 The sweet news proclaimed when our souls merge,

95 From out of the poem's obscure ciphers
 The riddle of our love will be deciphered.

From the eyes of the world we hide away
 That bliss the invisible see today;
 But it will return in future glory
 100 One early, beautiful hour of the day.
 Inspired, I see later ages survey
 The melody that never dies away;

For through the universe's harmony

This song will last into posterity.

Contributor Bios

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