

# POETRY AND AGAPĒ

## *Reflections on Schiller and Goethe*

BY HELGA ZEPP-LAROUCHE  
CHAIRMAN, SCHILLER INSTITUTE

About the immortality of our national poet Friedrich Schiller there can be no doubt. So it is quite possible for us to imagine that, since he is immortal, he might be alive today, and that he is just now looking around in Germany. What he thought of the potential of the German people, he let us know in the sketch for his poem, *German Greatness*, for example. To judge from this high idea, he would probably be horrified about the German reality of today. He would find all too many of the maladies once again in exacerbated form, which he had written about in the *Aesthetical Letters*, especially the coincidence of an enervation of leading strata and a degeneration of entire population groups.

What advice would Schiller give us today? Without any doubt, Germany today is in a confounded situation, and the country's special strategic and geographical position is certainly one of the most difficult conceivable in the world. It is therefore not entirely incomprehensible if many of its better, thinking citizens are threatening to succumb to

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resignation when they have to watch as the decision-makers pay obeisance in their unprincipled mediocrity to the presumed new masters.

Yet, the greatest problem does not lie primarily in the admittedly alarming, objective reality, but rather more in the personal, subjective realm. Most Germans today are cut off from those sources which could give them the inner power in this hour of need, to seek positive solutions even in the midst of the most adverse circumstances—German humanist culture and especially the heritage of the German classical period. And it would grieve Schiller the most, that his work is so little alive in the population today—not for his own sake, but because there are so many treasures there which could help our poor, shattered people.

More than ever before, Germany today needs its Schiller, despite the *Zeitgeist* which is apparently aimed in the other direction. Just now, we need the beneficent effect which ensues from occupying ourselves with his image of man, and never before was it so urgent that we rise up to his high ideals. The German classics, but especially Schiller's poetry and philosophy, are the soul of the German nation, and if we awaken them to new life today, then all of the laws of the universe speak in favor of a new, magnificent Renaissance issuing from them.

It is only at such extraordinary moments that a person realizes that it is not the things of the mind which move history, but rather the emotions underlying thinking, which determine both the method of thinking, as well as the objects thought about. In this respect, the two emotions of *Agapē* and *Eros* may be considered to be the two fundamental motive forces of all human action and structures of thought. It is either the love of humanity, *Agapē*, which inspires an epoch as its general orientation, or it is self-deification, *Eros*, with all of the emotions which issue from it, which dominates the spirit of an era. And if one looks back, it may easily be established, that all progress in the history of humanity always depended

upon the action, often of a single person, moved by *Agapē*, regardless of whether this "action" was a cultural, political, or religious work. As soon as the work of this individual has begun to take effect upon his contemporaries, or even upon many successive generations, we see that the moral character of the people was improved. And, vice-versa, it was often the influence of a single person, whose self-love was displayed as a model by those wielding power, who cast the human species back into barbaric conditions once more.

Of all thinkers who ever expressed themselves in the German language, Friedrich Schiller is the one out of whose work there speaks the most grand and most beautiful love of humanity, indeed, in whose work and life there is nothing to be found, which were not determined by the passionate desire to ennoble the character of people. Schiller is the poet of *Agapē*, in the most primordial sense of the word. Schiller was uniquely capable of combining the interests of virtue stylistically, and in the most playful way, with poetry, so that, although establishing the highest of ideals in the process, naturalness was never violated in the representation. No other poet has been capable of portraying man in greater beauty, nor has any other been in more perfect agreement with the most existential truths of Christian-humanist philosophy. Schiller was able to portray the things most sacred to man, at once with the same inner necessity and freedom, as Raphael with his Madonnas. He was the genius who knew how to draw other persons aloft to his own heights.

If the German population of today has strayed from Schiller, that is not progress, as is sometimes said; it is rather an infinite loss, but, as we may hope, not an irreparable one. For Schiller demanded of poetry nothing less than that it should treat only of universal subjects, those which would lose nothing of their truth in coming centuries. Is it conceivable that we might rediscover those riches for the people of our day, that culture in which

Schiller's work is but the most beautiful jewel, but by no means the only treasure?

### SCHILLER'S VIEW OF HUMANITY

One of Schiller's most lovable character traits, and also the key to understanding the immense power which went forth from him, was his genuinely childlike innocence, which, despite all of the later storms in his life, he never lost. This was the source of his unshakable faith in a better mankind. He had a very happy childhood, as he felt himself, and saw himself frankly as a "favorite of happiness," in contrast to Rousseau and Kant, whose childhood he suspected to have been very unhappy, to judge from their philosophies as adults.

At the end of his stay at the Karlsschule, Schiller said: "The first years of youth perhaps determine the facial features of a person for his entire life, just as they are the foundation of his moral character on the whole." Schiller had the good fortune not only to grow up in a loving family, but he also experienced a spiritualized religiosity, imparted especially by his teachers Jahn, Moser, and Abel, in the tradition of Leibniz's *Theodicy*, which was to form the foundation of his philosophical views throughout his life. While as a youth he had first wanted to become a pastor, he quite soon rejected the narrowness of Lutheran dogmatism. But what stayed with him was a deep and childlike piety, and so in *The Robbers*, he has the character Karl Mohr say: "It was a time when I could not fall asleep if I had not said my prayers at night."

Schiller also had the advantage of studying at one of the best Württemberg Latin schools in the city of Ludwigsburg, particularly through the method of dialogue of his teacher Jahn, who used the Latin texts not only as a means of teaching grammar, but in order to let the world of thought and the conditions of life of antiquity come alive once again. In these early years, Schiller's enthusiasm for classical anti-

quity, the heroic, and greatness of character, were awakened.

Schiller posed his own idea of history against that of Rousseau. For Rousseau, the golden age of humanity was long past; this innocent childhood had been destroyed by culture, so that this happy condition could only be regained by turning away from culture and returning to a state of nature. Schiller, on the other hand, pointed up the importance of the powers awakened in childhood, and actually saw, in the repetition of childhood at a more mature age, the possibility of overcoming the inner fragmentation of modern man, and creating a new man, reconstituted in his wholeness. Schiller himself was the best example for this new ideal of humanity, of the person who, with the ideals of his childhood, consciously becomes a personality perfecting itself as life progresses.

It is astounding, with what clarity Schiller set forth the philosophical principles in his first dissertation in the Karlsschule, principles which would later blossom in such rich form from all of his poetry and works. The ideas developed in this dissertation, which, by the way, was rejected because of its content, show Schiller to be a worthy successor to Nicolaus of Cusa and Leibniz, even if their works were imparted to him only indirectly. Thus, in the introduction to his *Philosophy of Physiology*, in the first chapter on the "Determination [*Bestimmung*] of Man," he wrote: "This much, I think, is sufficiently demonstrated, that the universe is the work of an infinite mind, and is designed according to a magnificent plan. Likewise, as through the omnipotent influence of divine power, the universe ran from the plan into reality, and all forces work, and work into one another, like the strings of an instrument running together with a thousand voices into one melody; so should the minds of men, ennobled with the forces of the divinity, discover from the individual effects their cause and intent, from the connection of causes and intentions, to discover the entire grand plan of the whole, to recognize the Creator out of the plan, to love Him, exalt Him, or more briefly, to hear Him

sublimely ringing in our ears: Man exists, that he may strive to match the grandeur of his Creator, with his very vision to encompass the world as the Creator encompasses it.—Godlikeness is the determination of Man. This, his ideal, is indeed infinite, but the spirit is eternal. Eternity is the measure of infinity, i.e., it will eternally grow, but never achieve it.”

What would have been more characteristic for Schiller's thinking than to point to the divine determination of mankind in an essay on physiology in conclusion of his study of medicine at the *Karlsschule*? He places the answer to the question of the meaning of human life foremost, that is, being like God as the determination of Man, and demands at the same time, that the person adopt this manner of vision of his Creator when he looks upon the world. This motif resounds throughout Schiller's works, according to which man is only truly man when “he has absorbed the divinity into his will.” And Cusa's idea, too, of the coincidence of the macrocosms of the created world with the microcosms of the knowing mind, is addressed, an idea we will encounter often, worked up in poetic form, for example in the poems *The Artists* and *Columbus*.

Schiller furthermore writes, “A soul, says one wise man of this century, enlightened to the degree that it has the plan of divine providence as a whole before its eyes, is the happiest of souls. An eternal, grand, and beautiful law has bound perfection to delight, discontent to imperfection. That which brings a person closer to that atonement, be it directly or indirectly, will delight him. That which brings him away from it, will grieve him, and what grieves him, he will avoid, but what delights him, for that he will strive. He will seek perfection, because imperfection causes him pain; he will seek it because it delights him himself. . . . Thus it is as much whether I say: The person exists to be happy; or he exists to be perfect. He is only then perfect, when he is happy. He is only then happy, when he is perfect.”

Nicolaus of Cusa expressed the same idea when he said the person is entirely human only when he develops all of the capacities with which he is endowed, but if he does not do this, his existence would be diminished.

And Schiller's words once more: "Yet another law, one beautiful and wise, a branch of the first, bound the perfection of the whole with the happiness of the individual human being with human being, yea, human being with animal, by the bond of universal love. Love, therefore, the most beautiful and most noble force in the human soul, the great chain of sentient nature, is nothing but the exchange of myself with the being of a fellow human being. . . .

"And why universal love: Why all the delights of universal love?—Alone out of this latter fundamental intent, to promote the perfection of one's fellow man. And this perfection, comprehension, research, admiration of the great plan of nature. Yea, ultimately all the delights of the senses, of which one ought to speak in its place, incline themselves, through many bends and apparent contradictions, finally back to the same point. Immutably, the truth remains ever identical to itself: The human being is destined to comprehend, to research, to admire the great plan of nature."

The highest summit worthy of man's aspirations, for Schiller, is perfection, the atonement of the individual with the "great plan of nature." Love is thus nothing else than that we make that person, whom we love, better, because only thereby do we make him happy. Thus, the motive force which promotes both the perfection of the whole as well as the happiness of the individual, is love—*Agapē*. If, accordingly, we win a fellow human being to better understand the universe through the development of his own intellectual capacities, he will come closer to his purpose, to be more similar to God, and thus our love, understood as *Agapē*, has the effect of permitting him to become happier.

Schiller again treated love as the motive force of all progress in the universe in *Theosophy of Julius*, which was

first published in a revised form in the *Thalia* in May 1786. There he described it as the calling of all thinking beings in the universe to rediscover its lawfulness. He writes: "Harmony, truth, order, beauty, excellence give me joy, because they transform me into the active condition of their inventor, because they reveal to me the presence of a reasoning, sentient being, and permit me a presentiment of my kinship with this being."

The affinity of the human being with the Creator thus permits him to find joy in the truth, beauty, and so forth, but love is the emotion which permits him to take part in all of this. Schiller goes even further, and says: "I frankly confess that I believe in the existence of an unselfish love. I am lost if it does not exist, I surrender divinity, immortality, and virtue. I have left no proof of these hopes if I cease to believe in love. A spirit which loves itself alone is an atom swimming in immeasurable empty space."

Here, Schiller develops the idea contained in all of his poems. "Thus love—the most beautiful phenomenon in creation endowed with soul, the omnipotent magnet in the world of mind, the source of devotion and of the most sublime virtue—love is but the reflected appearance of this single primal force, an attraction of the excellent, founded upon a momentary exchange of the personality, an exchange of beings.

"If I hate, I deprive myself of something; if I love, I am the richer for that which I love. Forgiveness is to find once again a lost possession—misanthropy is extended suicide; egoism is the supreme poverty of an enervated being."

This "attraction of the excellent" makes it easier for the human being to grow, to develop himself, and, in history, to progress as a species. In the poem *The Artists*, Schiller explains the whole of human history out of this principle. The third strophe reads:

Nur durch das Morgentor des Schönen  
Drangst du in der Erkenntnis Land.  
An höhern Glanz sich zu gewöhnen,

Übt sich am Reize der Verstand.  
 Was bei dem Saitenklang der Musen  
 Mit Süßem Beben dich durchdrang,  
 Erzog die Kraft in deinem Busen,  
 Die sich dereinst zum Weltgeist schwang.

Was erst, nachdem Jahrtausende verflossen,  
 Die alternde Vernunft erfand,  
 Lag im Symbol des Schönen und des Großen  
 Voraus geoffenbart dem kindischen Verstand.  
 Ihr holdes Bild hieß uns die Tugend lieben,  
 Ein zarter Sinn hat vor dem Laster sich gesträubt,  
 Eh noch ein Solon das Gesetz geschrieben,  
 Das matte Blüten langsam treibt.  
 Eh vor des Denkers Geist der kühne  
 Begriff des ew'gen Raumes stand,  
 Wer sah hinauf zur Sternenbühne,  
 Der ihn nicht ahndend schon empfand?

(Only through beauty's morning-gate did you penetrate the land of knowledge. Before it becomes accustomed to greater brilliance, the understanding must practice on allurements: the sound of the muses' strings courses through you with sweet trembling, nourishing the strength within your breast that later soars to the soul of the world.

What aging reason found only once millennia had run their course, already lay revealed to the childish mind in the symbol of the beautiful and great. Her lovely image bid us to love virtue; the gentle soul did battle against evil before some Solon ever wrote down laws, whose methodical cultivation yields colorless blossoms. Long before the idea of infinite space stood clearly in the philosopher's mind, who could gaze at the starry theater, and not immediately intuit it?)

The beauty of nature facilitates our love of the Creator, the grandeur of the stellar heaven awakens the power of imagination for the intellectual comprehension of infinity. There is thus an intimate relationship between the capacity for emotions and thinking. Just as love reveals all riches to the human being, its contrary is what severs him from everything, makes him impoverished. Thus, the question

of intelligence has implicitly become a question of morality, for that for which the person is ready to take responsibility, that too is what he understands.

Schiller brings this chain of thought to its ultimate decisive point: “. . . Egoism and love divide mankind into two absolutely dissimilar species, the borders between which never flow together. Egoism establishes a mid-point in itself; love plants it outside itself in the axis of rotation of the eternal whole. Love is the co-governing citizen of a flourishing free state. Egoism is a despot in a devastated creation. Egoism plants its seeds for gratitude, love for ingratitude. Love makes gifts, egoism only lends—regardless whether before the throne of adjudicating truth, whether for the pleasure of the next moment, or upon the prospect of a martyr’s crown, regardless of whether the interest is to be paid in this life or the other!”

This idea comes up in Schiller’s drama, *Don Carlos*, as the Marquis of Posa finds the prince Don Carlos in a pitiful state of mind, because he had forgotten the great ideals of his youth and only pines over his hopeless love for his stepmother. Posa accuses him: “Oh Carlos, how poor you are, how destitute, since you love none but yourself!”

Schiller’s early writings, today unfortunately forgotten for the most part, contain hidden within them the key to the poet’s thinking, in whatever form it may later be expressed. Schiller’s beautiful ideal of humanity has its basis in nothing else than in love, in the sense of *Agapē*. This is that love of God, of humanity, of one’s neighbor, whom a person ought to love as he loves himself. It is that tender love for the great idea that mankind will achieve the age of reason, but this tenderness is bound together with that passion, without which nothing great can ever be created. This pure, unselfish love brings Schiller, as if self-evidently, to lay out an image of man in which moral beauty is the maximum of the perfection of character. Since this love is true, its expression is free and natural, it issues from that state of emotion where reason and sensuousness, duty and inclination, coincide, when duty has become nature.

## THE BEAUTIFUL SOUL

About such a person, Schiller says, that he has a beautiful soul. By no means is this the moralizing Kantian, who obtains virtue only in rigid battle against his inclinations pulling him in the contrary direction. Thus, as Schiller was occupying himself with Kant's work, in a letter to his friend Körner on February 19, 1793, he wrote: "Clearly the violence which practical reason [for Kant] exerts, in the moral determination of the will against our instincts, has something insulting and embarrassing about it. Now, we want to see compulsion nowhere, not even when reason exerts it, and we want to know the freedom of nature, too, is respected, because we consider every being from the standpoint of aesthetic judgment to be an end in itself, and because for us, to whom freedom is supreme, it is loathsome and disgraceful that something should be sacrificed to anything else and serve as a means. For that reason, a moral deed can never be beautiful, if we observe the operation through which it is wrested from the distress of sensuousness."

The only use which Schiller allows for Kant's conception of morality is when it briefly comes into effect, when as-yet uneducated emotions threaten to set themselves in opposition to the demands of reason. But that is only a negative assessment: Why, Schiller correctly asks, did Kant write only for the serfs, and not for the beautiful souls? The beautiful souls are beautiful, not because of anything they do, but because they are. For the same reason, Schiller rejected every visible moral utility of a work of art, for this utility could never contribute anything to the beauty of a work; this must instead issue forth out of the nature of an object freely and without compulsion. In *Kallias, or, On the Beautiful*, Schiller describes a moral deed by portraying five variations of the help of a passerby for a person hurt and lying on the side of the road. Schiller lets only the behavior of the very last traveller stand as an example of a morally beautiful deed, because he came to the help of the

person stranded and hurt at the wayside, unbidden and without reflection, although it cost him something, and because he did what was his duty with such ease, as if it had been merely his instinct to act that way.

Schiller sees the way toward ennoblement of the individual, upon which all improvement in political affairs depends, in the education of emotions up to those airy heights where those emotions correspond with reason. Only if the individual person perfects himself, will the character of the nation be improved, and only then does political progress occur. In *The Legislation of Lycurgus and Solon*, Schiller writes: "The state itself is never the purpose, it is important only as the condition under which the purpose of mankind may be fulfilled, and this purpose of mankind is none other than the development of all the powers of people, i.e., progress."

And further, "In general, we can establish a rule for judging of political institutions, that they are only good and laudable, to the extent that they bring all forces inherent in persons to flourish, to the extent that they promote the progress of culture, or at least do not hinder it." Schiller's sole motive for publishing his journal, *Die Horen*, was "to promote true humanity." In the Eighth Letter on *Don Carlos*, he wrote about the fundamental ideas on which the drama is based, as the favorite subject of the century, "the most perfect condition of mankind, achievable as it is contained in its nature and in its powers," as "the greatest possible freedom of the individual together with the highest flourishing of the state," or simply, "the proliferation of a more pure, more tender humanity."

## SCHILLER AND THE STUDY OF HISTORY

Schiller, after all, occupied himself intensively for ten years with the study of history, and, in addition to poetry and philosophy, he made accomplishments of genius in this field. His inaugural address as professor of history at the

University of Jena, on the subject of *What Is, and to What End Do We Study, Universal History?*<sup>2</sup> is exemplary, and surpassed all existing theories of history. For Schiller, history was neither the dry chronology of events, nor an academic end in itself. Precisely because of its universal character, Schiller saw the study of history as an excellent means for shaping the personality, in direct contrast to the specialist education even of his time. In the inaugural address, he says: "But one destiny you all share in the same way with one another, that which you brought with you into this world—to educate yourself as a human being—and history addresses itself to this human being."

Schiller's independent historical works were intended not only to impart to the readers knowledge of the great freedom-fighters of various times in history, but also to give them courage for the present. Schiller's great historical dramas are based on this study of history, and added "the infallible key to the most secret accesses of the human soul" to the knowledge of the power of theater. Schiller compared the moral power of theater with religion, with which it shared the task of forming the character of people.

In the foreword to *The Bride of Messina*, Schiller says: "True art does not aim at portraying a transitory play, it seriously intends not merely to transpose a person into a momentary dream of freedom, but to make him really and truly free, and to achieve this by awakening in him a force, exercising and educating it to push the sensuous world, which otherwise weighs upon us but as raw matter, pressing upon us as a blind power, into an objective distance, to transform it into a free world of our mind, and to dominate the material world through ideas."

How else should a person be able to develop himself than through just this power awakened in him; what permits him to grow as a person; what raises him above the intellectual feebleness of mediocrity, and "permits him to love the truth more than any system"? That art has this effect, can be confirmed by anyone who has experienced the potential effect of great dramas or works of music upon an audience,

on condition that the artists step back behind the work itself and are able to communicate the same *agapic* excitement which inspired the poet or the composer. The artist who knows how to move the hearts of his audience in that way, makes the people who are his audience free, in fact.

If such a work of art is a tragedy, for example, the viewer sees himself confronted with realities which pose to him questions more profound than those he usually faces in his own life. By identifying himself with the main characters and the theme of the tragedy, he grows beyond himself. The chief characteristic of tragedy is that it demonstrates that the human being is not the sole master of his own fate. Even if he does everything necessity demands of him, summoning up all of his powers, violent developments may intervene, which destroy all of his efforts, and perhaps even his very existence.

Schiller, however, employs just these tragic situations to show that these blows of fate may indeed be capable of destroying a person externally, but, in doing so, they awaken in the character of the drama, and in the viewers, powers of self-assertion and of moral resistance against unjust conditions. It is these extraordinary situations which first demonstrate the true greatness of a person, because they crush those who are only apparently great, just as necessity can bring forth unforeseen heroes. In the *Xenia* dialogue of *Shakespeare's Shadow*, Schiller polemicizes against the pettiness of the poets of his time, and asks: "Whence do you take grand, gigantic fate, which elevates the person when it crushes him?"

So, human greatness lies not in the enjoyment of extraordinary power or a special reputation by virtue of advantages of birth or possessions. It lies instead in that personal heroism which is characteristic of that person who prescribes to himself a great idea, and does not deviate from it even under the most adverse circumstances, or in the behavior of a simple citizen, who, in an emergency, suddenly understands that whether the course of fate can be altered, depends upon his own action.

Such heroic traits are found in individual leading characters in all of Schiller's dramas, from Karl Mohr, through Posa and Elizabeth, Max and Thekla, down to Gertrud and Wilhelm Tell. The most beautiful example and most successful representation of the "warrior angel," however, is without any doubt the *Maid of Orleans*, Schiller's representation of Joan of Arc: a simple shepherd girl who courageously saves a nation in danger.

It is no coincidence that such heroic figures are found in all of Schiller's dramas, because they represent the standard which Schiller thought to be the only one worthy of human beings, one which he demanded be met by the poet himself, by the figures he conceived, as well as by people in real life. Thus, in the *Aesthetical Letters*, he wrote about the requirements of his own time: "Particularly now, it is creative political work that occupies nearly all spirits. The events in this last decade of the 1700's are, for philosophy, no less demanding and important, than is trading for the man of the world. . . ."

"A law of the wise Solon condemned the businessman who chose no party in a revolt. Always when there had been an incident, in response to which this law could have been used, it seemed to be like the present, where the great destiny of mankind is brought into question, and where man, therefore, as it seems, cannot remain neutral, without being guilty of indifference to what must be most holy for mankind, to be responsible. . . ."

For Schiller, the idea that someone could be neutral, or hide his views out of cowardly duplicity with respect to the great issues of history, was an outrage. In this respect, he took the biblical standpoint, that "the Devil will take those who are 'lukewarm.'" This may well be one of the reasons why the liberals of our day like Schiller so little.

### GOETHE, POET OF *EROS*

When one speaks about the German classical period, Schiller and Goethe are the first names which come to mind

as far as poetry is concerned, although there are other personalities who contributed more than Goethe to shaping the humanist spirit of the classical period, such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, who was much, very much closer to Schiller with respect to his ideal of humanity.

At first glance, one might be inclined to attribute tragic elements to Schiller's life: He died young, at the age of 45; he had to fight his entire life against hard, objective circumstances; and all too often, illness made his work difficult. Goethe, on the other hand, lived a long life, was always well provided with material goods, could do and let lie whatever he wanted, and everything seemed easier for him. And yet, Schiller was the happier of the two, and Goethe by far the poorer.

It is well known that Goethe was heartlessly indifferent to the fate of the nation, and Solon's wise law certainly applied to him. At the time when Germany was threatened with utter defeat under the assault of Napoleon's imperialist war campaigns, Goethe, unmoved, wrote the *Affinities*, a rather uninteresting piece about an exchange of partners, which appears in a favorable light only in comparison with today's soap operas. In 1811 he was still praising Napoleon, while during the entire scope of the Liberation Wars, he had nothing to say about this most sublime moment in German history, and remained utterly cut off from the general excitement.

What was the reason for this coolness toward ideals, for which the heart of every ardent patriot was inflamed? Goethe is the perfect example of an extraordinarily gifted person, who had the talent to become a genius, but who lacked the moral strength to realize this potential. What stood in his way was, quite simply, his vanity. The beauty of many of his lyric poems is incontestable, but what source does this beauty draw on? It was love, but not in the sense of *Agapē*, but of *Eros*. According to Goethe's view, informed by his study of antiquity, *Eros* was the heavenly, productive power of life, the drive for pleasure and pain, to whose

impulses one must at once surrender, as if to a higher authority.

This is why Goethe generally felt inspired to compose poetry only when he had just been overcome by a new infatuation, or had received some other external impulse which satisfied his need for attention. As a consequence, his poetic production was somewhat left to chance. If there were no external impulse, he often had to go through "dry periods," as long as twelve years (!) before his acquaintance with Schiller inspired him once again. That Goethe composed beautiful poems, especially in the lyrics of his youth, cannot be denied. One such beautiful poem which shows Goethe from his sympathetic side is the *May Festival*, one of the *Sesenheimer Lieder*, the poems written just as he had fallen in love with Friedericke Brion.

Wie herrlich leuchtet  
Mir die Natur!  
Wie Glänzt die Sonne!  
Wie lacht die Flur!

Es dringen Blüten  
Aus jedem Zweig  
Und tausend Stimmen  
Aus dem Gesträuch.

Und Freud' and Wonne  
Aus jeder Brust.  
O Erd', O Sonne!  
O Glück, O Lust!

How splendidly doth nature  
Shine forth to me!  
How glistens the sun!  
How laugh the fields!

Blossoms burst from  
Every branch  
And a thousand voices  
From the bush.

And joy and bliss  
 From every breast.  
 O Earth, O Sun!,  
 O happiness, O delight!

The *May Festival* expresses supreme jubilation. The soul and nature (O Erd', O Sonne, O Glück, O Lust) are moved by the same fundamental force, a pantheistic idea, which is to be found in all of Goethe's work. The last lines, too, sound quite beautiful:

Wie ich dich Liebe  
 Mit warmem Blut,  
 Die du mir Jugend  
 Und Freud' und Mut

Zu neuen Liedern  
 Und Tänzén gibst.  
 Sei ewig glücklich,  
 Wie du mich liebst!

As I love you  
 Warm-bloodedly,  
 You who give me youth  
 And joy and hearten [me]

To new songs  
 And dances.  
 Be ever happy,  
 As you love me!

But, unfortunately, there is no truth in them, since just because the girl who inspired this poem was so dumb to have loved Goethe, she was to be unhappy all her life, when he left her soon thereafter. That the crucial point for Goethe was not so much the happiness of the beloved as the pleasure of the conquest, becomes clear from another well-known poem, written in the same year. And there we read:

Und der wilde Knabe brach  
 's Röslein auf der Heiden.  
 Röslein wehrte sich und stach,  
 Half ihm doch kein Weh und Ach,  
 Mußt' es eben leiden.  
 Röslein, Röslein, Röslein rot,  
 Röslein auf der heiden.

And the rough boy picked  
 The little rose on the heath.  
 The rose defended herself and pricked,  
 But her woes and ahs were in vain,  
 She just had to bear it.  
 Rose, rose, little red rose,  
 Little rose on the heath.

As if the reference were necessary, Goethe suddenly speaks of Röslein (little rose) no longer as “it,” but as “she,” no “woe” or “ah” could help her—the poor girl. You see, *Eros* can be quite brutal.

What anguish and desperation erotic perplexity may lead to, was hardly given more accurate artistic expression than by Schubert in his musical composition to *Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel* from Goethe's *Faust*. Gretchen speaks these words after Faust has seduced her, and the other side of the coin of erotic emotion makes its appearance, i.e., the inner strife, anxiety, and desperation. The immense tension expressed in the music of Schubert's song betrays more than the words alone ever could, and the song reveals an astonishing depth of comprehension of the composer, who had just reached his nineteenth year!

Meine Ruh' ist hin,  
 Mein Herz ist schwer;  
 Ich finde sie nimmer  
 Und nimmermehr.

My peace is gone  
 My heart is heavy;  
 I will find it never  
 And nevermore.

Goethe himself commented on *Eros* as the driving force of all action in an explication of the poem *First and Last Words*. Orphic, and wrote to explain the strophe titled *Eros*: "By this notion, everything one might possibly conceive of is comprehended, from the most quiet inclination to the most passionate frenzy; here, there join together the individual Daimon and the seducing Tyche; the person seems to be obeying only himself, allowing sway to his own desires, pandering to his own instincts, and yet there are fortuitous elements which intercede, extraneous things which divert him from his way; he believes he has grabbed hold of something, yet he is the one captured; he believes he was won, yet he is already lost."

For Goethe, the demonic in a person was his inborn character, which is his fate, and which he must necessarily obey. If one investigates the deeper layers of Goethe's character, one discovers that *Eros*, "pandering to his instincts," "up to passionate frenzy," and the demonic, are closely connected—*Eros* is the emotion corresponding to the satanic.

Schiller perceived this character trait of Goethe's very precisely, and often spoke about it. In a review in the journal *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, of Goethe's drama *Egmont*, in which the demonic in human beings is graphically portrayed, Schiller correctly remarked, that *Egmont* was no masterpiece. He noted that the historical Egmont was far more tragic and passionate than what Goethe had made of him. Goethe had sinned "against nature and truth."

The reason for Schiller's criticism lay in the utterly contrary notions the two had of poetry and their image of man. Schiller wrote to Körner on September 12, 1788: "And his entire character is different from mine from the outset, his world is not mine, and the way we think appears to be utterly different." Although he respected Goethe's all-encompassing education, he remained ever critical of what Goethe produced, and repeatedly said, that "Goethe never had a moment of effusion" even toward his closest friends. He would make his existence known, Schiller said, charita-

bly, but only as a god, without giving of himself, which was egotistical to a very high degree, and calculated entirely toward the enjoyment of self-love. This was a state of mind, Schiller wrote, in which it was impossible that Goethe was happy, but it would make him, too—Schiller—unhappy to be often in Goethe's company.

Once he went so far as to write the following to Körner: "Mankind ought not allow one with such a character to appear among it. He is despicable to me for that, although I love his mind with all my heart and think highly of him." Another time, after a visit with Goethe, he wrote again to Körner, that Goethe, as a human being, utterly lacked the sympathetic way of being committed to an idea. To Goethe, wrote Schiller to his friend, philosophy was something too subjective, and that is where argument and conviction stopped. Goethe's way of thinking was too sensuous, and "he fingers too much."

The picture resulting from his work and the reflections of his contemporaries, shows Goethe to be in fact, and in more than one respect, Schiller's counterpole. Of course, one must understand the relationship between the two poets from the standpoint of the time in which they lived, and take as a measure for each of them the immense accomplishments in language and comprehensive education. But what did each of them create on the basis of this background, in the face of the moral decadence of their time?

While Schiller demanded of the artist that he ennoble himself to become the ideal which he portrays before he might dare to have an effect upon his audience, Goethe made no such demands upon himself. For Schiller, the character of a human being was more important than the poet, while Goethe enjoyed being celebrated as the "prince of poets," captivating people with his multifaceted talents.

The judgment on Goethe must be even more crushing, when one considers the totality of his dramatic work. While Schiller, exclusively, brought only "the great issues of mankind" upon the stage, all of the themes which Goethe treated were outright petty. The male characters in particular cast

a very desolate light upon their author. There is no single hero figure. Instead, debauched milksops are put on the stage for the first time; yes, in a certain way, Goethe is the great grandfather of the sentimental Don Juans who have dominated modern poetry since then.

Goethe's main male characters, Werther, Wilhelm Meister, Faust, Egmont, Weißlingen, Ferdinand, Tasso, and so on, are all narcissistic, effeminate Don Juans, who really only need women to bolster their vanity. In reality, they are puffed-up weaklings. And Goethe's female figures are either victims, or manipulative or silly characters, suitably setting the witty male egoists in the right light. No, nothing great can be found in such characters, and so, from Goethe's effeminate self-adulating creatures to today's "softies" and "wimps" of our contemporary so-called authors, there was a clear path: one heading steeply downhill.

### GOETHE'S *FAUST*

More than anything else, however, the key to understanding Goethe is the *Faust* poem, which Goethe worked on for a number of decades. It is, and, among other things, a documentation of his own self-image. Goethe himself is Faust, and he is talking about himself when he says to Wagner:

FAUST: Du bist dir nur des einen Trieb's bewußt;  
 O lerne nie den andern kennen!  
 Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust,  
 Die eine will sich von der andern trennen.  
 Die eine hält, in derber Liebeslust,  
 Sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen;  
 Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dunst  
 Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen.  
 O gibt es Geister in der Luft,  
 Die zwischen Erd' and Himmel herrschend weben,  
 So steiget nieder aus dem goldnen Duft  
 Und führt mich weg, zu neuem, buntem Leben!

You are possessed by only one passion;  
 Oh learn to know no others!  
 Two souls are housed, ah! in my breast,  
 And one seeks to sever me from the other.  
 The one holds, in rude pleasure of love,  
 Onto the world with clasping organs;  
 The other lifts itself forcefully from the haze  
 To the fields of lofty heritage.  
 Oh if there be spirits in the air,  
 Swaying in potency between earth and heaven,  
 Come down below from the golden vapor  
 And lead me on the way, to new, colorful life!

Now, the one soul speaks for itself, the image of “rude pleasure of love” with “clasping organs” is ugly enough, and the other turns toward magic with the appeal for new excitements, new titillations for those smothered by boredom, who wish to live only for the pleasure of the moment.

Goethe had also written:

Kannst dem Schicksal widerstehen;  
 Aber manchmal gibt es Schläge.  
 Will's nicht aus dem Wege gehen,  
 Ei, so geh du aus dem Wege!

You can resist fate;  
 But sometimes there are blows.  
 If it won't get out of your way,  
 Oh, then you get out of its way!

Get out of fate's way—That is not a proposal made to heros, but it is indeed one for *schlemiehls*. And he also wrote:

Willst du dir ein hübsch Leben zimmern,  
 Mußt dich ums Vergangne nicht bekümmern;  
 Das wenigste muß dich verdrießen;  
 Mußt stets die Gegenwart genießen,  
 Besonders keinen Menschen hassen  
 Und die Zukunft Gott überlassen.

If you wish to make a beautiful life for yourself,  
 You must not worry about the past;  
 Vex yourself the least;  
 You must instead enjoy the present,  
 Particularly hate no men  
 And leave the future to God.

When the pleasure of the moment becomes a value, the moral standard is obviously lost. Even more problematic is a side of Goethe's philosophy expressed in the following lines:

Geh! gehorche meinen Winken,  
 Nutze deine jungen Tage,  
 Lerne zeitig klüger sein!  
 Auf des Glückes großer Waage  
 Steht die Zunge selten ein:  
 Du mußt steigen oder sinken,  
 Du mußt herrschen und gewinnen,  
 Oder dienen und verlieren,  
 Leiden oder triumphieren,  
 Amboß oder Hammer sein.

Go! Listen to my advice,  
 Utilize your youthful days,  
 Learn early to be cunning!  
 On Fortune's great scales  
 The tongue is seldom a guarantee:  
 You must rise or sink,  
 You must conquer and win,  
 Or serve and lose,  
 Suffer or triumph,  
 Anvil or hammer be.

"Anvil or hammer be"—this is a thoroughly oligarchical way of looking at things. It is crude Darwinism, and the same dubious worldview of the mafia and all totalitarian regimes. It is the same mentality which attracted Goethe more to Napoleon than to the patriots of 1813. To pledge oneself only to the pleasure of the moment, and to enter a

pact with the devil to that purpose, is that not the core of the immorality of all times, then, as much as today? It is the essence of that which makes satanism in the world possible.

Even if the Faustian pact with the devil seems at first glance to have no connection with the existentialist thirsting for pleasure and the liberal accommodation to the path of least resistance (just get out of the way), the inner connection is yet all the more obvious. For the name of Satan is temptation, and that is precisely the form Mephistopheles' appearance takes. It is the problem of oligarchical power-elites, who want to stay on the side of the hammer at any price, and their only concern is to get out of the way of anything which might endanger this position and reduce the pleasure of the moment.

Since this kind of thinking refuses to acknowledge the existence of a natural law as a higher lawfulness, the consequences of arbitrary power appear to be fortuitous, and as a result, there is a greater propensity to believe in "luck," astrology, and magic. This is especially the case when one has the machinery of deception under one's own control, as Schiller describes this in *The Ghost-Seer* (*Der Geisterseher*), for example.

That Goethe worked up the legend of Faust in this way, rather than doing it differently, is doubtlessly a reflection of his character, for the story had been known for a good 300 years, and was originally intended to be a comparison with the fall of Lucifer, in which Faust ends in disgrace. In the second part of *Faust*, Goethe abolishes just this disgrace, saves Faust in a mystical way, and lets Faust challenge God with impunity, and even glorifies the deed.

Goethe's version of *Faust* thus corresponded directly to the philosophy of the modern Enlightenment, but also that of the Romantics, which was aimed not only at exterminating the moral influence of the Church, but also the image of mankind of so-called German idealism, based on similar principles.

Already in the legendary version, Faust represented intellectually anti-church science and education, a trait

which was to become dominant in Goethe's version. Goethe thereby created one of the most crucial points of reference for the gnostic satanism of today, and since then the battle between humanism and scientific materialism, or so-called "pure" science, has taken on many forms. It appeared, though not for the last time, in the form of Nazi ideology against the German classics, but just as much in the form of communism against Christianity.

The crucial point at issue in all of these succeeding forms is that of the image of man and the question of morality in social life, as well as in politics. Either the person is moved by *Agapē*, and acts as a beautiful soul for the improvement of the conditions of mankind, or he lets himself be driven by *Eros*, and does everything to satisfy his own self-love—even if he has to sell his soul to the devil. How present this problem is, becomes abundantly clear from an interview which the liberal foreign minister of the Federal Republic of Germany, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, gave on the subject. There still are people, Genscher said, who speak of the Soviet Union as "the Empire of Evil," but the Germans have something Faustian about them in any case, and so they might as well try to make a deal.

The fateful question for the German nation today can indeed be put in the following context: Whether we decide, under extremely precarious circumstances, to enter a Faustian pact with the devil; or whether there is still an echo of the greatness of Schiller among us, and whether moral resistance stirs in us, precisely in these times of need, from which alone that heroic courage can emerge, which is necessary to save a nation which has succumbed. It is an occasion of hope, that the power of love is richer than the poverty of self-love, and we owe it to our Schiller, that we not prove to be a small species in this situation.