

E. H. Gombrich, (in Peregrine Horden ed.) The Symbol of the Veil: Psychological Reflections on Schiller's Poetry, Freud and the Humanities, London, 1985, pp.75-109 [Trapp no.1985E.1]

Friedrich Schiller is not a household word among educated people in the English-speaking world, and I trust nobody will take it amiss if I mention that he was born in November 1759 ten years after Goethe, that unlike Goethe he had a harsh and rebellious youth, but earned an ever-increasing reputation first as professor of history at Jena, and then as playwright, moving to Weimar, where he died in May 1805. Needless to say, the stages and facets of this varied career had given rise to an enormous bibliography,[1] and have never been neglected by specialists in departments of German language and literature. But these signal achievements of Anglo-Saxon critics and historians, from which I have gratefully profited as much as circumstances permitted, stand in obvious contrast to the benevolent ignorance of the general public. When I asked for an edition of Schiller's poetry in two of the main academic bookshops of London, the helpful sales assistants were genuinely surprised, because they had never heard that Schiller had written any poetry. I know that this happened *in partibus infidelium* and that perhaps I would have had more luck in Oxford. The translations I have supplied lack all literary pretensions, though I have occasionally allowed the lines to scan if this required no effort on my part.

Let me express the hope, though, that no one will judge the quality of Schiller's verse from this *ad hoc* selection and translation. I believe that the best of Schiller's philosophical poetry is quite unique in literature. Those who see in Schiller mainly the philosopher who applied the insights of Kant to the criticism of literature may be tempted to regard these poems as a late flowering of the didactic genre which goes back to Lucretius and flourished in the eighteenth century, say, in the poetry of Erasmus Darwin. But in claiming them to be unique I wanted to indicate that such a reading would be one-sided. Wilhelm von Humboldt, who was in constant intellectual contact with the poet at the time when he produced these masterpieces, and even occasionally suggested amendments in wording and versification, testified that Schiller's philosophical ideas developed out of the medium of his imagination and his feelings, adding that this was obvious in the case of a poet.[2] In other words the poetic vision came first in Schiller, and though he struggled manfully and successfully also to translate his visions into the systematic language of Kantian philosophy, his profound and difficult philosophical prose works can also be seen as attempts to rationalize and communicate his basic emotional concerns.

With this assertion I have taken up our theme of psychoanalysis and its influence on the arts and humanities. No doubt it is this influence which has made me use the term rationalization, and has prompted me to look at a recurrent image of Schiller's philosophical poems with more than purely rhetorical interest. But though this influence and this interest go far back in my intellectual life to the time when I collaborated with Ernst Kris on problems of the theory of art, this approach has never interfered with my admiration for Schiller's creation. There may be applications of psychoanalysis to art or poetry which incur this danger and indeed deserve the strictures of C.S. Lewis in his witty essay on 'Psycho-analysis and literary criticism'.[3] But luckily we have the words of Freud himself to guard against this type of reductionism. Writing about his paper on Dostoevsky to Stefan Zweig in 1920, Freud explained that, 'with you I need not fear the misunderstanding that any emphasis on the so-called pathological elements aims at minimizing or explaining the magnificence of Dostoevski's poetic creativity'.[4] I certainly wish neither to minimize nor to explain the magnificence of the poetic creativity of Friedrich Schiller. What I have learned from psychoanalysis is rather to respect the ability of the genius to transmute the impulses arising from emotional conflicts into valid creations, valid not only for him but also for others. I have neither the competence, nor, to be frank, much confidence in the use of the technical terminology in which psychoanalysis describes this process of transformation.' But I am not sure that it will be needed here in any case, when discussing the work of an exceptional poet and thinker. Freud himself sometimes expressed the conviction that writers and poets have an intuitive insight into the secret workings of their own and other men's minds which anticipated and matched

the more systematic accounts of his theory. In other words they were conscious of many things which are often located in the Freudian unconscious. Strangely enough Friedrich Schiller was here more popish than the pope or more Freudian than Freud. In a remarkable letter to Goethe of 27 March 1801 he comes to speak of the role of the unconscious in art and poetry – though he calls it not *das Unbewusste* but *das Bewusstlose*, the lack in consciousness. He was taking issue with the Romantic philosophy of Schelling, who had maintained that Nature started from the unconscious in order to raise it to consciousness while art started from the conscious and ended in the unconscious – a discussion, by the way, which may remind you of the many links between psychoanalysis and German Romanticism. In any case Schiller retorted that experience shows that the poet also starts exclusively from the unconscious; indeed he can consider himself lucky if, by means of the clearest consciousness of what he is doing, he can get so far that he can again recognize his first dark global idea of his work undiminished in the finished process. 'Without such a dark but powerful global idea,' he continues, 'which precedes all technical elaboration, no work of poetry can come into being.' 'Poetry,' he suggests, 'consists precisely in the ability to express and communicate that unconscious, and to translate it into an object' — we might say to objectify it. What makes the poet, Schiller concludes, is the ability to unite the unconscious with awareness ('*das Bewusstlose mit dem Besonnenen vereinigt macht den poetischen Künstler aus*').[5]

I hope this formulation from Schiller's own hand empowers me now to go in search of the total idea, the global idea, which he has objectivized in so many of his works. As I have indicated in my title I find it embodied in an image or metaphor which frequently recurs in his oeuvre, the image of the veil. Let me then start from the poem of 1795 which centres on this very image or emblem, '*Das verschleierte Bild von Sais*' ('The veiled image of Sais'), which takes us to the legendary sages of ancient Egypt, the priests of the Temple of Isis who also figure in Mozart's *Magic Flute*, which was then triumphing in the opera houses of Europe after the composer's premature death.

An eager youth had gone to the sanctuary in search of initiation, explaining to his guide that, truth being undivided, he wants nothing but the whole truth.

*Indem sie einst so sprachen, standen sie
In einer einsamen Rotunde still,
Wo ein verschleiert Bild von Riesengrösse
Dem Jüngling in die Augen fiel. Verwundert
Blickt er den Führer an und spricht: 'Was ist's,
Das hinter diesem Schleier sich verbirgt?'
Die Wahrheit', ist die Antwort — 'Wie?' ruft jener,
Nach Wahrheit streb ich ja allein, und diese
Gerade ist es, die man mir verhüllt?'*

*Das mache mit der Gottheit aus', versetzt
Der Hierophant. 'Kein Sterblicher, sagt sie,
Rückt diesen Schleier, bis ich selbst ihn hebe.
Und wer mit ungeweihter, schuld ger Hand
Den heiligen, verbotnen früher hebt,
Der, spricht die Gottheit'— Nun?' 'Der sieht die Wahrheit.'
'Ein seltsamer Orakelspruch! Du selbst,
Du hättest also niemals ihn gehoben?'
'Ich? Wahrlich nicht! Und war auch nie dazu
Versucht'— Das fass ich nicht. Wenn von der Wahrheit
Nur diese dünne Scheidewand mich trennte' -
'Und ein Gezetz', fällt ihm sein Führer ein,
'Gewichtiger, mein Sohn, als du es meinst,*

*Ist dieser dünne Flor — Für deine Hand
Zwar leicht, doch zentnerschwer für dein Gewissen.'*

*Der Jüngling ging gedankenvoll nach Hause;
Ihm raubt des Wissens brennende Begier
Den Schlaf, er wälzt sich glühend auf dem Lager
Und rafft sich auf um Mitternacht. Zum Tempel
Führt unfreiwillig ihn der scheue Tritt.
Leicht ward es ihm, die Mauer zu ersteigen,
Und mitten in das Innre der Rotonde
Trägt ein beherzter Sprung den Wagenden.*

*Hier steht er nun, und grauenvoll umfängt
Den Einsamen die lebenslose Stille,
Die nur der Tritte hohler Widerhall
In den geheimen Grüften unterbricht.
Von oben durch der Kuppel Öffnung wirft
Der Mond den bleichen, silberblauen Schein,
Und furchtbar wie ein gegenwärt ger Gott
Erglänzt durch des Gewölbes Finsternisse
In ihrem langen Schleier die Gestalt.
Er tritt hinan mit ungewissem Schritt;
Schon will die freche Hand das Heilige berühren,
Da zuckt es heiss und kühl durch sein Gebein,
Und stösst ihn weg mit unsichtbarem Arme.
Unglücklicher, was willst du tun? So ruft
In seinem Innern eine treue Stimme.
Versuchen den Allheiligen willst du?
Kein Sterblicher, sprach des Orakels Mund,
Rückt diesen Schleier, bis ich selbst ihn hebe.
Doch setzte nicht derselbe Mund hinzu:
Wer diesen Schleier hebt, soll Wahrheit schauen?
Sei hinter ihm, was will! Ich heb ihn auf.'
(Er ruft's mit lauter Stimm.) `Ich will sie schauen.' `Schauen!'
Gellt ihm ein langes Echo spottend nach.*

*Er spricht's und hat den Schleier aufgedeckt.
Nun,' fragt ihr, `und was zeigte sich ihm hier.'
Ich weiss es nicht. Besinnungslos und bleich,
So fanden ihn am andern Tag die Priester
Am Fussgestell der Isis ausgestreckt.
Was er allda gesehen und erfahren,
Hat seine Zunge nie bekannt. Auf ewig
War seines Lebens Heiterkeit dahin,
Ihn riss ein tiefer Gram zum frühen Grabe.
`Weh Dem', dies war sein warnungsvolles Wort,
Wenn ungestüme Frager in ihn drangen,
`Weh Dem, der zu der Wahrheit geht durch Schuld,
Sie wird ihm nimmermehr erfreulich sein.'*

While they were talking in this vein they found themselves
In the interior of a lone rotunda
Where a veiled image of gigantic size

Impressed the youth, who, with a sense of wonder,
Looked at his guide and asked him, 'What is this
That hides behind this veil?'—'Truth', was the answer.
'What?' he exclaims, 'it's after Truth alone I strive
And now Truth is to be concealed from me?'

'That you must settle with the Goddess', said
The hierophant. 'No mortal hand', said she,
'May lift this veil till I myself shall lift it.
But he whose sacrilegious guilty hand
Will grasp at this forbidden sacred veil,
He' — says the Goddess — 'Well?' — 'will look on Truth.'
— 'What strange oracular words, and you yourself
Have never lifted it?'
'I? Surely not, nor did I ever feel such a temptation.'
'I cannot grasp this — if Truth and I
Were separated by this thin division' -
'And by a law', said rapidly the guide,
'This flimsy veil weighs little in your hand,
But on your conscience it weighs hundredweights'.

The youth went home by many thoughts oppressed.
His thirst for knowledge robbed him of his sleep
And restlessly he tossed upon his bed.
When midnight came he rose, and to the temple
Involuntarily he turned his steps.
To scale the wall was easy and a leap
Took the bold youth inside the sanctuary
Where soon he came to the rotunda's centre.

So there he stands, and with a sense of dread
The lifeless stillness grips the lonely youth.
Only the hollow echo of his steps,
Reverberates from the mysterious vault,
While from the opening of the dome above
The moonlight pours its pale and silvery blue.
And fearful, like the presence of a God,
A shining apparition in the gloom,
In its enormous veil the statue stands.

So, moving closer with unsteady steps,
His ruthless hand is reaching for the Holy
When heat and cold run through his bones and marrow
And hold him off with an invisible arm.
Unfortunate, what deed is this? So calls
A faithful voice within his inner self.
Are you to tempt the Holiest of Holies?
No mortal, said the Oracle, you know,
Must move this veil, till I move it myself.
But did these self-same lips not also say
That he who lifts it will behold the Truth?
'Be what it may behind, I lift it now.'

(He calls in a loud voice.) 'I want to see her.'
'See her,' a strident echo mockingly repeats.

So said, he seized the cover of the veil.
'Well', you will ask, 'what was it that he saw?'
I cannot tell; unconscious, pale and wan
The temple priests discovered him next morning
Prostrate before the pedestal of Isis.
Whatever there he saw and there experienced
Did never pass his lips, for evermore
All cheerfulness had vanished from his life.
A searing grief soon brought him to his grave.
'O woe to him' – these were his warning words
When he was importuned by questioners.
'O woe to him who comes to Truth through guilt,
For it will never, never, bring him joy.'

We can guess where Schiller found the legend which so inspired him. It must have been in the footnote which Immanuel Kant appended to a paragraph of his *Critique of Judgement* which deals with genius:

Perhaps there has never been a more sublime utterance, or a thought more sublimely expressed, than the well-known inscription upon the Temple of *Isis* (Mother Nature): 'I am all that is, and that was, and that shall be, and no mortal hath raised the veil from before my face'.

Kant continues by commending a book on 'natural philosophy' by a certain Segner for having chosen this motif for its frontispiece, in order to fill the apprentice, whom he was ready to take into this temple, with 'a holy awe'.^[6] Schiller in fact had already alluded to the inscription six years before writing the poem in his essay on 'The mission of Moses', where he applies it to the need of faith to remain esoteric.' But in the poem just quoted the application is surely much wider; nor need we indulge in much guesswork, for its message, which is meant to remain mysterious in the parable, is spelt out in another poem of the same year, 1795, and entitled 'Poesie des Lebens' ('The poetry of life'). It is ostensibly addressed to a friend, who, as I may put it, despises veils. He, we are told, is a stern realist who wants to see truth naked, *entblösst*. The effect of this uncompromising demand is as catastrophic as was the sacrilegious action of the youth in the temple:

*Erschreckt von deinem ernsten Worte,
Entflieht der Liebesgötter Schar,
Der Musen Spiel verstummt, es ruhn der Horen Tänze,
Still trauernd nehmen ihre Kränze
Die Schwestergöttinnen vom schön gelockten Haar,
Apoll Zerbricht die goldne Leier,
Und Hermes seinen Wunderstab,
Des Traumes rosenfarbner Schleier
Fällt von des Lebens bleichem Antlitz ab.
Die Welt scheint, was sie ist, ein Grab.
Von seinen Augen nimmt die zauberische Binde
Cytherens Sohn; die Liebe sieht,
Sie sieht in ihrem Götterkinde
Den Sterblichen, erschrickt und flieht,
Der Schönheit Jugendbild veraltet,
Auf deinen Lippen selbst erkaltet*

*Der Liebe Kuss, und in der Freude Schwung
Ergreift dich die Versteinerung.*

Alarmed by words of such severity
The flock of Cupids takes to flight at once.
The Muses cease to play, the Hours cease to dance,
The divine sisters take in silent grief
The charming garlands from their glorious locks.
Apollo breaks his golden lyre
And Hermes his miraculous staff.
The rosey-coloured veil of dream
Drops from the haggard face of life.
The world *seems* what it *is* —a grave.
From off his eyes Cythera's son will take
The enchanted bandage, love will see,
See in the heavenly offspring of the Gods
The mortal, shrinks away and flees,
The beauty that was youth grows old,
And on your very lips is chilled
The kiss of love, till in the sweep of joy
You will be turned to stone.

I believe there is no other poem by Schiller where the emotional meaning lies as close to the surface as in this didactic exhortation addressed to a materialist. We now know why the youth of Sais could never feel joy again after having lifted the veil from Truth. Knowledge of the truth is unbearable to us mortals. I fear Schiller has slightly veiled his stark message at the end of the parable by inserting the saving formula, 'woe to him who comes to Truth through guilt'. For it is always a guilty desire to seek more knowledge than is good for us.

I think I need not encroach too far on the psychoanalyst's prerogative if I add, on the basis of the other poem, that the knowledge Schiller means is what used to be called carnal knowledge.

*... die Liebe sieht,
Sie sieht in ihrem Götterkinde
Den Sterblichen, erschrickt undflieht.*

... love will see,
See in the heavenly offspring of the Gods
The mortal, shrinks away and flees.

Carnal knowledge, the act of love, leads to disillusionment and disenchantment. I think once we are alerted to the deeply rooted psychological conflict here expressed we find it again in various guises. Not unexpectedly, it surfaces in one of Schiller's most popular poems, 'Das Lied von der Glocke' ('The lay of the bell') of 1799, where it takes the form of homely wisdom but retains the image of the veil:

*Drum prüfe, wer sich ewig bindet,
Ob sich das Herz zum Herzen findet!
Der Wahn ist kurz, die Reu ist lang.
Lieblich in der Bräute Locken
Spielt der jungfräuliche Kranz,
Wenn die hellen Kirchenglocken
Laden zu des Festes Glanz.
Ach! des Lebens schönste Feier*

*Endigt auch den Lebens-Mai,
Mit dem Gürtel, mit dem Schleier
Reisst der schöne Wahn entzwei.*

Let him who binds himself forever
Examine whether her heart matches his.
The illusion is brief, the repentance long.
Charming in the Virgin's locks
Sits the lovely bridal wreath
When the bright peal of the church bells
Summons to the splendid celebration.
Alas, the fairest feast of life
Also ends the May of life.
With the girdle and the veil
The fair illusion is also torn.

And finally, even more starkly, in a long poem entitled 'Kassandra' ('Cassandra') of 1802 where Schiller expresses his dread of reality in the most succinct stanzas:

*Frommt's, den Schleier aufzuheben,
Wo das nahe Schrecknis droht?
Nur der Irrtum ist das Leben,
Und das Wissen ist der Tod.
Nimm, o nimm die traur'ge Klarheit,
Mir vom Aug den blut gen Schein!
Schrecklich ist es, deiner Wahrheit
Sterbliches Gefäss zu sein.*

*Meine Blindheit gib mir wieder
Und den fröhlich dunkeln Sinn!
Nimmer sang ich freud ge Lieder,
Seit ich deine Stimme bin.
Zukunft hast du mir gegeben,
Doch du nahmst den Augenblick,
Nahmst der Stunde fröhlich Leben;
Nimm dein falsch Geschenk zurück!*

*... Mir erscheint der Lenz vergebens,
Der die Erde festlich schmückt;
Wer erfreute sich des Lebens,
Der in seine Tiefen blickt!*

Is it meet to lift the veil
Where the horror threatens nigh?
Error alone is life
And knowledge is death.
Take, O take the sad awareness
From my eyes, that sight of blood.
It is terrible to be the mortal vessel
Of your truth!

Let me have again my blindness
And the cheerful dreamy mind.

Never have I sung with joy
Since I have become your voice.
You have given me the future,
But you robbed me of the now
Of the gaiety of the hour.
Take back your false present!

... Springtime that adorns the earth
Comes in vain to me;
Who would enjoy life
Who gazes into its depths?

Once more the deep pessimism of the lines is associated with the erotic, as Cassandra confesses:

*... Gerne möcht ich mit dem Gatten
In die heimsche Wohnung ziehn;
Doch es tritt ein stygscher Schatten
Nachtlich zwischen mich und ihn.*

... Gladly I would follow the spouse
To the dwelling of his home;
But a shadow from Styx
Steps every night between him and me.

'Kassandra' may be seen as a dramatic, not a confessional poem, but the same dread of reality breaks through in other creations, such as in the famous ballad of 'Der Taucher' ('The diver', 1797) who accepts the king's challenge and jumps into the whirlpool after a beaker to return exclaiming:

*'Lang lebe der König! Es freue sich,
Wer da atmet im rosichten Licht.
Da unten aber ist's fürchterlich,
Und der Mensch versuche die Götter nicht,
Und begehre nimmer und nimmer zu schauen,
Was sie gnädig bedecken mit Yacht und Grauen.'*

'Long live the King — and let those rejoice
Who breathe in rosy light.
But down there it is fearful,
And let man never challenge the gods,
And never, never, desire to see
What their mercy hides in night and gloom.'

There is no literal veil here, but the 'merciful veiling of the horrors of the deep which we should never want to behold.

Even when writing a dithyrambic drinking song ('Dithyrambe', 1796) the same thought could not be kept at bay. When the poet has joined the feast of the gods they call on Hebe to hand him the cup and to sprinkle his eyes with heavenly dew so that he cannot see the hated Styx and believes himself to be one of them.

*Netz ihm die Augen mit himmlischem Taue,
Dass er den Styx, den verhassten, nicht schaue,
Einer der Unsern sich dünke zu sein.*

Sprinkle his eyes with heavenly dew
So that he does not see hateful Styx
And believes himself to be one of us.

Remembering that it was this same man who wrote the ecstatic drinking song of the 'Ode to joy' (1785) immortalized by Beethoven, you may agree that there is here a psychological riddle which has not always been acknowledged by Schiller's admirers or indeed by his detractors. The latter have sometimes dismissed him as a high-minded but naive idealist whose preachings bordered on the platitudinous. But this facile view obviously does not quite square with the passages I have quoted so far. One rarely connects a naive idealism with an insistence on the sceptical wisdom that ignorance is bliss. The denial of reality, the attitude nowadays called 'escapism', turns out to be inseparable from his message, which often comes out more starkly in his poems than in his philosophical prose. This element of dread, almost of revulsion, from life in the raw may well spring from psychological tensions he learned to master and utilize in the course of his brief creative life, beset as it was by hardship and illness.

The poems I have introduced so far all date from the time of Schiller's maturity. Clearly we must turn to his earlier products if we want to trace their psychological roots. Now the tone and character of his early works differ notoriously from his later masterpieces. Made rebellious by the strict discipline of the military academy which he was compelled to attend by the tyrannical Duke of Württemberg, he startled the German public at the age of twenty-one by his revolutionary play *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*, or rather *The Brigands*), soon to be followed by a series of some thirty lyrical poems of equal turbulence and daring.

There is much in these youthful products of 1781 which is slightly embarrassing, and some of the worst lines and stanzas were later eliminated by the poet himself before he incorporated these early effusions in his collected works. Yet we must take note of the opinion of a recent critic, Professor Herman Weigand of Yale University, that these poems of Schiller's youth, though crude and raw as poems, are, psychologically considered, the most interesting product of Schiller's career. Using the frank language of our age, Professor Weigand justifies his verdict by the observation that 'the male sex drive, now naked, now cerebrally masked, exhibits itself to full view in the most characteristic poems of the period'. It is easy to see what he has in mind when one reads the rather awful hymn on virile potency originally entitled 'Kastraten and Männer' ('Eunuchs and men'), but also the arch stanzas of 'The chariot of Venus', 'The triumph of love' and some of the Odes to Laura, with their undisguised celebration of sexual ecstasy; or if one remembers the crass and bawdy episodes in *Die Räuber* such as the raping of nuns. One might also agree with Professor Weigand when he says that 'desire stalks also through the later poems and essays by Schiller as the contaminating drive to be renounced in favour of disinterested contemplation'. I am less convinced, perhaps, by the same author's diagnosis that 'in the experience of sex the moral dichotomy of duty and impulse confronted Schiller in the core of his personality'. [8] Less convinced, because it seems to me that the poems of his later period I have quoted illustrate a conflict that goes deeper than the moral dichotomy between impulse and duty.

As we have seen, it is not so much ordinary normal desire which pervades his poetry but a desire counterbalanced by revulsion. To be sure, this flight from the flesh might be connected with orthodox Christian teaching about original sin and the Fall, and it is true that the story of the Fall also figures in one of the frantic love poems to Laura I have mentioned, a poem in which the symbol of the veil also makes its appearance.

It is entitled the 'Das Geheimnis der Reminiscenz' ('The secret of reminiscence') and draws on the Platonic conceit according to which male and female were once one single being. In that paradisaical state the veil is allowed to tear without revealing horrors.

*Unsern Augen riss der Dinge Schleier,
Unsre Blicke, flammender und freier,
Sahen in der Schöpfung Labyrinthen ...*

Before our eyes the veil of reality was torn,
And our gaze, more fiery and more free,
Peered into the labyrinth of creation ...

But that, remember, was before the Fall. For the poem ends with an ambiguous allusion to the forbidden fruit – ambiguous, because it almost reads like an apotheosis of Eve's sin:

*Laura — majestätisch anzuschauen
Stand ein Baum in Edens Blumenauen;
'Seine Frucht vernein ich eurem Gaume,
Wisst! der Apfel an dem Wunderbaume
Labt — mit Göttertraume.'*

*Laura — weine unsres Glückes Wunde! —
Saftig war der Apfel ihrem Munde —
Bald — als sie sich unschuldsvoll umrollten —
Sieh! — wie Flammen ihr Gesicht vergoldten! —
Und die Teufel schmollten.*

Laura, majestic to behold
There stood a tree in the flowering groves of Paradise.
'I deny its fruit to your palate,
Know, the apple of this miraculous tree
Gives you the bliss of a divine dream.'

Laura — weep at the wound of our happiness!
How juicy was the apple in their mouth —
But soon — when they tumbled innocently in the grass —
Look — how the flames gilded their faces —
And the devils grinned.'

The flames, I suppose, are those of hell, because the innocent tumble did not remain innocent. But the mood of that ending is far from Christian.

Schiller had indeed wanted to become a Protestant pastor, but since theology was not an option offered in the duke's academy he reluctantly chose a medical career. We can only speculate whether his experiences in the dissecting room and during his brief spell as a regimental surgeon contributed to his conviction that it is better not to look behind the veil. What we know is that the intellectual doctrine of a benevolent and admired physician had a lasting influence on his outlook.[10]

I make no apology for alluding to this system of ideas in a lecture devoted to a psychological interpretation, for if I need authority for this move I find it in the writings of my erstwhile mentor Ernst Kris, who stressed that we must never lose sight of the special historical conditions which determine

the expression of psychological tensions." In Schiller's case I have no doubt that his studies enabled him to formulate and objectify his dominant conflict.

Schiller's medical dissertation was entitled 'On the connection between man's animal nature and his spiritual nature'. It was a subject of the most urgent topicality in the Age of Reason, when La Mettrie had proclaimed that man was a machine, and when Holbach and Helvetius had propagated their various materialistic systems. Responding to this challenge, Schiller's teachers preferred the doctrines of the Scottish philosophers Ferguson, Hutcheson and Reid, who went their own way in interpreting the relation between the life of the body, the life of the spirit and that of the universe. What matters to me in this welter of ideas is the place assigned to instinct in the household of nature. Instinct, or whatever alternative term is chosen,[12] dominates the existence of animals and also holds its sway over human actions and feelings however much it may come into conflict with pure spirituality. But in many of these systems instinct is more than a principle of life; by a bold imaginative leap it is identified with the promptings of nature in a pantheistic universe in which even the mutual attractions of the planets can be seen as a manifestation of sympathy." Remember the 'Ode to joy' again: 'was den grossen Ring bewohnt, huldigt der Sympathie' ('whatever inhabits the great circle pays tribute to sympathy'). Now in this unified vision which contains echoes of Plato and the mystics, instinct, the sex drive if you prefer the word, is revealed as a cosmic principle, and this helps to account for the hyperbolic language of Schiller's early love poems, such as his 'Phantasie an Laura' ('Phantasy for Laur') of 1781:

*Meine Laura! Nenne mir den Wirbel,
Der an Körper Körper mächtig reisst,
Nenne, meine Laura, mir den Zauber,
Der zum Geist gewaltig zwingt den Geist!*

*Sieh! er lehrt die schwebenden Planeten
Ewgen Ringgangs um die Sonnefliehn ...*

My dear Laura, tell me of the vortex
Which with mighty pull our bodies joins.
Tell me my dear Laura of the magic
Which compels the spirit to the spirit.
See, it teaches all the hovering planets
How to dance for ever round the sun ...

and so on. It is this cosmic force, as the poet assures his beloved, which animates them both in their love and which can only perish with the universe itself.

And yet this glorification of sexual love as a law of nature must have consequences which are bound to trouble a reflecting nature such as Schiller's. All the ecstatic celebration of instinct could not possibly conceal from him the logical consequence that, if it is instinct which drives the world around, we are no more than puppets, creatures of necessity or chance.

It was this negative consequence of the philosophy of man that was drawn by the French materialists and that must have troubled Schiller as it troubled so many others.[14] I believe that it is this threat to human freedom, more than the conflict between impulse and duty, that survives in the poems I quoted at the outset. Remember that as soon as love 'sees' it 'sees a mortal, shrinks away and flees'. The truth of our animal nature is that terrible truth that must be veiled. This feeling of revulsion, an almost Swiftian disgust, is most openly expressed in the soliloquies of the villain Franz Moor in *Die Räuber*, Franz Moor the libertine who justifies his nefarious plans of fratricide and patricide by asking what could possibly render life sacred: 'not, surely, the actus itself by which it originated, as if it were more than a bestial process to satisfy bestial desires ...'. 'Look,' he continues, 'that is the whole mystery

which you veil with a fog of sanctity in order to take advantage of our fearfulness.[15] Franz, as you notice, has seen nature in the raw behind the pious veil, and what he has seen is nothing but bestiality – a bestiality which seems to obsess him, for he returns to the topic later in the play, where he muses that the existence of most people may depend on the heat of a summer afternoon, the attractive look of bed linen or the horizontal position of a scullery belle which may have prompted the bestial desire that led to the birth of a human being.[16]

It may be objected that it is nothing less than monstrous to attribute to the playwright the opinions he put into the mouth of his grotesque villain, and of course that is true. But then Schiller himself had written in the revealing preface to the first edition of the play that it behoves any playwright to roam for a while through his own nocturnal labyrinths ('augenblicklich seine nächtlichen Labyrinthe durchwandern'), and it is down there he found his Franz Moor. Moreover, in a famous letter to Reinwald of 14 April 1783 which exhibits all the intuitive self-knowledge Freud concedes to the poet, Schiller writes, in discussing his play *Don Carlos*, that 'all creations of our imagination are nothing but our own self'.

It suits my trend of thought that Schiller explains in that same confessional letter that he regards love as no more than a happy deception. 'Is it really for another being that we tremble, glow and melt? Certainly not. We suffer all this only for ourselves, for the I of which the other creature is the mirror.' [17]

Whatever the immediate experience may have been which prompted this outburst – and we hear from contemporaries that the original Laura was not a very prepossessing person[18] – it is not with Schiller's various emotional entanglements that I can be here concerned, but with his reactions to the vicissitudes of a hard and unsettled life. There is no more telling document of this intellectual and emotional ferment than the *Philosophical Letters* of 1786. They are cast in the form of a correspondence between two friends, Julius and Raphael, who represent the two poles of Schiller's mental universe. The first is an enthusiastic youth, the second a maturer person who has deprived the young man of his religious ideals. In the first of the letters, therefore, Julius reproaches Raphael: 'you have stolen the faith that gave me peace ... a thousand things were venerable to me, ere your sorry wisdom stripped them naked'. In the second letter, the complaint mounts to a crescendo. 'Our philosophy is the fateful curiosity of Oedipus who never ceased asking till the terrible oracle was solved: "may you never learn who you are".'¹⁹ It is a remark which may well make a psychoanalyst prick up his ears, and that not only because of the mythological allusion. To ask who we are – one might say – is to ask how we were made, and the answer must be that of Franz Moor, the terrible secret that must remain hidden behind the veil.

True, in the correspondence a few soothing words from his friend encourage the young enthusiast to substitute for this sorry wisdom a grandiose account of a pantheistic theosophy which certainly provided the *raison d'être* for the correspondence. But this poetic effusion is yet placed between quotation marks, as it were. The correspondence ends with a friendly but cool response from the older friend who preaches intellectual humility.

In thus distancing his own vision of a consoling metaphysics Schiller continued on the path we saw him pursuing in his interpretation of love. I previously referred to the denial of reality. Now we must call it by its other name, the acceptance of fantasy. Whatever may lie behind the veil, we must cherish man's capacity to live in such a dream-world.

Perhaps the first of the poems in which this message is spelt out explicitly is the one appropriately called 'Resignation' (1781), and, equally appropriately, it settles account with the Christian hope. Here the poet imagines himself confronting the ultimate Judge and claiming his reward for having sacrificed all the pleasure of life to the hope of a happy afterlife, defying and despising, as he did, the mockery of his sceptical fellow-creatures. But the verdict of an invisible genius decrees otherwise.

*‘Zwei Blumen,’ rief er, ‘hört es, Menschenkinder,
Zwei Blumen blühen für den weisen Finder,
Sie heissen Hoffnung und Genuss.
Wer dieser Blumen Eine brach, begehre
Die andre Schwester nicht.
Geniesse, wer nicht glauben kann. Die Lehre
Ist ewig wie die Welt. Wer glauben kann, entbehre!’*

‘Two flowers,’ quoth he, ‘listen human children,
Two flowers blossom for the wise who find them.
Hope is the name of one, the other’s Pleasure.
He who picks one of them must not demand
To pick the other;
Let him who is short of faith have pleasure
that lesson is old as history.
He who has faith must practice renunciation.’

Renunciation of pleasure, indeed abstention is now his message in ‘Einer jungen Freundin ins Stammbuch’ (‘Lines written into the album of a young lady’, 1788), no less poignant in hindsight for being addressed to his future wife Charlotte von Lengenfeld:

*Sei glücklich in dem lieblichen Betrüge,
Nie stürze von des Traumes stolzem Fluge
Ein trauriges Erwachen dich herab.
Den Blumen gleich, die deine Beete schmücken,
So pflanze sie — nur den entfernten Blicken;
Betrachte sie — doch pflücke sie nicht ab!
Geschaffen, nur die Augen zu vergnügen,
Welk werden sie zu deinen Füßen liegen,
Je näher dir—je näher ihrem Grab!*

Be happy in the charm of this deception,
And may a sad awakening never hurl you
Down from the soaring boldness of this dream.
Just like the flowers which adorn your garden
Which you have planted for the distant gaze,
Enjoy their looks but do not ever break them.
Created to give pleasure to the eyes
They will lie dead and faded at your feet.
The nearer you, the nearer to their grave.

Two years later, in his long and fine poem ‘Die Götter Griechenlands’ (‘The Gods of Greece’, 1788), Schiller still deplores our loss of innocence, our loss of the poetic illusion he finds enshrined in pagan mythology before science shattered its fabric:

*Da der Dichtkunst malerische Hülle
Sich noch lieblich um die Wahrheit wand,
Durch die Schöpfung floss da Lebensfülle,
Und was nie empfinden wird, empfand.*

When the painted cloth of poetry
Was charmingly still wrapped around the truth,

Then creation still pulsated with life
And what never will feel, still felt.

How can we recover that feeling in a Newtonian Universe?

*Unbewusst der Freuden, die sie schenket,
Nie entzückt von ihrer Trefflichkeit,
Nie gewahr des Armes, der sie lenket,
Reicher nie durch meine Dankbarkeit,
Fühllos selbst für ihres Künstlers Ehre,
Gleich dem todten Schlag der Pendeluhr,
Dient sie knechtisch dem Gesetz der Schwere,
Die entgötterte Natur.*

Not aware of all the joys it gives us,
Not delighted by its own perfection,
Never knowing of the arm that guides it,
Not enriched by my own gratitude,
Senseless to the honour of its Maker,
Like the regular striking of the clock
Slave to the iron laws of gravity,
Nature is bereft of all the Gods.

Once more, increasing knowledge had spelt unhappiness for man; for now he confronts an alien Universe. Once, he had felt kinship with the pagan gods; now the transcendent divinity is out of his reach.

*Bürger des Olymps konnt ich erreichen,
Jenem Gotte, den sein Marmor preist,
Konnte einst der hohe Bildner gleichen:
Was ist neben Dir der höchste Geist
Derer welche Sterbliche gebären?
Nur der Würmer Erster, Edelster,
Da die Götter menschlicher noch waren,
Waren Menschen göttlicher.*

To Olympus I might still aspire,
And the God his marble celebrates
Could the noble sculptor try to equal.
What is compared to you the highest spirit
Of the spirits born of mortal men?
Of the worms perhaps the first, most noble.
When the Gods had more humanity
Humans were more godly too.

Winston Churchill once said that if indeed we are all worms, he wanted to be a glow-worm. Schiller certainly shared his aspiration. And he nourished the hope that the required glow could be derived from the arts. In a long rhapsodic poem of 1789, 'Die Künstler' ('The artists'), he sketched a vast canvas of the rise of mankind from animal status through the guidance of the arts.

The arts it was which paved the way towards the sublimation of instinct and turned a mere drive into love.

*Dass von des Sinnes niederm Triebe
Der Liebe bessrer Keim sich schied,
Dankt er dem ersten Hirtenlied.
Geadelt zur Gedankenwürde,
Floss die verschämtere Begierde
Melodisch aus des Sängers Mund.*

Thanks to the first of shepherd's songs
The better germ of love divided
From sensuality's low drive.
For now, more bashfully, desire,
Raised to the noble dignity of thought,
Melodiously flowed from the singer's lips.

Or, to revert to my leitmotif:

*Ihr führet uns im Brautgewande
Die fürchterliche Unbekannte,
Die unerweichte Parze vor.*

You show us the dreaded Unknown
The pitiless Fate
Dressed as a bride.

I need not remind you that the bridal garb is the veil.

But in this poem, which we may describe as the last of Schiller's youth, written, as it was, in his thirtieth year, the hope is still expressed that the artist will not only veil our animal nature, he will ultimately lead mankind beyond this status. The experience of Beauty in Art Will make him ripe, in distant millennia, also to contemplate Truth without a veil; or to put it in Schiller's favourite idiom of mythological metaphor, once man is of age, Venus will cast off her veil and stand before him as Urania, with a fiery crown.[20]

But these enthusiastic intimations of an aesthetic millennium date from the year before Schiller seriously began the study of Kant, whose ideas were henceforth to dominate his reflections. One of the results of Kant's *Critiques* must have been of immediate relevance to Schiller's psychological conflicts. He was assured that neither the claims of materialism nor those of religion could be tested in the Court of Reason. Their alleged proofs were bound to be spurious. We cannot ever know 'the thing in itself'.

One of the first poems Schiller wrote when he resumed poetry after an interval of some six years was a farewell to his youth and its ideals, 'Die Ideale' (1795).

*Die Wirklichkeit mit ihren Schranken
Umlagert den gebundnen Geist,
Sie stürzt, die Schöpfung der Gedanken,
Der Dichtung schöner Flor zerreisst.*

Reality with all its barriers
Besets the spirit in its chains.
What thought created now collapses
And Poetry's fair veil is torn.

What saves the poet from despair in this progressive disillusionment, when after a short springtime even the dream of love escapes, are two consoling companions — friendship, and work.

*Beschäftigung, die nie ermattet,
Die langsam schafft, doch nie zerstört,
Die zu dem Bau der Ewigkeiten
zwar Sandkorn nur für Sandkorn reicht,
Doch von der grossen Schuld der Zeiten
Minuten, Tage, Jahre streicht.*

Activity, that never flags,
That creates but slowly but never destroys.
True, to the building of Eternity
It merely adds its grain of sand
And yet — of the great debt of ages
It cancels minutes, days, and years.

I cannot think of a more fitting description of that watershed that separates maturity from youth. No doubt his maturity also owes something to Kant's influence, to the *Critique of Practical Reason* with its emphasis on duty. He had also learned from Kant not to dismiss belief in values as mere illusion. True, it could not be justified by scientific proof, but it could be justified by faith as a postulate.

As Schiller was to write in the beautiful poem 'Die Sehnsucht' ('Longing', 1801).

*Du musst glauben, du musst wagen,
Denn die Götter leiten kein Pfand;
Nur ein Wunder kann dich tragen
In das schöne Wunderland.*

You must have faith, you must be bold,
Because the Gods don't give a pledge;
Only a miracle can take you
To the fair land of miracles.

For Schiller, of course, the land of miracles is still the realm of poetry, of art, which is also the realm of freedom because here man is liberated from the chains of necessity and the servitude to desire. He had enthusiastically accepted Kant's conception of the beautiful as disinterested pleasure, a pleasure totally divorced from selfish desire or interest. That vision of man's ability to cut the chains that kept the body in bondage allowed him to celebrate what I have called the denial of reality, first manifested in the play instinct as the most precious gift life can offer, the gift of freedom.

I cannot follow here the road which leads from this point directly to the core of Schiller's philosophy of art;[21] the thesis which conceives of art as what one might call the illusion of the illusionless, the knowing enjoyment of fiction and of the willing suspension of disbelief. What I rather want to stress in my context is the link which Schiller's aesthetic creed still maintains with what I have called his psychological conflicts. I see this link in his puritanical insistence on abstention, his rigorous separation of the aesthetic emotion from any kind of sensuous indulgence.

That he dismissed with scorn Edmund Burke's derivation of our sense of beauty from the erotic instinct of self-propagation cannot surprise us.[22] But his description of a concert hall during the playing of ravishing music is again revealing for the disgust it conveys.

However much noise there may be in a concert hall, everybody will be 'all ears' as soon as a sweetly melting passage is performed. An expression of sensuality bordering on the brutish usually appears on people's faces, the drunken eyes are watery, the open mouth is all desire, a lustful tremor seizes the whole body, the breath is rapid and faint, in short all the symptoms of inebriation appear — a clear proof that the senses are revelling but that the spirit, or the principle of freedom in man, has fallen prey to the sensuous impression.[23]

This almost Manichean dualism pervades the most accomplished of Schiller's philosophical poems, which he originally called 'Das Reich der Schatten' ('The realm of shadows'), but published later as 'Das Ideal and das Leben' ('Ideal and life', 1795).²⁴ It is a celebration of both renunciation and illusion:

*Wollt ihr schon auf Erden Göttern gleichen,
Frei sein in des Todes Reichen,
Brechet nicht von seines Gartens Frucht!
An dem Scheine mag der Blick sich weiden,
Des Genusses wandelbare Freuden
Rächet schleunig der Begierde Flucht.
Selbst der Styx, der neunfach sie umwindet,
Wehrt die Rückkehr Ceres Tochter nicht;
Nach dem Apfel greift sie, und es bindet
Ewig sie des Orkus Pflicht.*

If on earth you strive to equal God,
To be free in the domains of death,
Never in its garden pick the fruit.
While the gaze may revel in their sight
Rapidly the changing joys of pleasure
Are revenged, as the desire Rees.
Even Styx, which winds its ninefold loops,
Could Demeter's daughter not imprison;
When she grasped the apple, then for ever
To the laws of Orcus she was slave.

This insistence on the instability of earthly pleasures, which only lead to the loss of desire, serves to show that there is more than one thread that links Schiller's mature Kantian philosophy with the ideas of his formative years. Indeed Kenneth Dewhurst and Nigel Reeves, in their edition and translation of Schiller's early medical writings,^[25] have convinced me that many of his early conceptions survived the conversion to Kant. We would expect such a continuity when looking at Schiller's development in a psychological light. We have learned from psychoanalysis to pay attention to this element of continuity in change which so often marks the creations of great minds.

In his first treatise on the links between man's animal nature and his spiritual nature Schiller had enlarged on the fitfulness of the animal impulses, which go through a cycle of tension and release. He speaks of *Nachlass*, relaxation, that follows the satisfaction of instincts, which serves the purposes of nature no less certainly than does the preceding climax of tension.

That warning of revulsion, that dread of what lies behind the veil, therefore, which animates the poems of Schiller's Kantian period, and which I quoted at the beginning, is still connected with his theoretical and emotional view of the condition of man. In his perceptive book on Schiller, Emil Staiger has emphasized how harshly Schiller views the realities of existence in that very poem on 'Ideal and life'.^[26]

If the harshness sometimes appears to be mitigated in Schiller's later works, the change must be attributed to the second of the major influences he experienced during the years that still remained to him. I am of course speaking of Goethe. The story of this friendship, and its reflections in their correspondence and in their joint epigrams, belongs to the most moving episodes of literary history. We have Goethe's own words for it that it was he who weaned Schiller of his dread of implacable Nature. At least that is what he wrote in 1817, twelve years after Schiller's death, when he looked back on the beginnings of their friendship in 1794 after a prolonged period of mutual distrust. 'Schiller,' wrote Goethe, 'preached the gospel of Freedom. I did not want the rights of Nature to be curtailed. Maybe it was his friendly feeling towards me rather than genuine conviction that made him not speak of the Good Mother in his Aesthetic Letters with the same harsh expressions which had rendered his essay on Grace and Dignity so hateful to me.[27]

'Hateful', 'verhasst', is a strong word to use, but there are indeed passages in that long and difficult treatise *Über Anmut and Würde* (On Grace and Dignity) in which sensuality is bluntly equated with bestiality and painted in the same lurid colours we encountered in Schiller's description of the effects of music.²⁸ Even more rigorous, if that is possible, is Schiller's rejection of any compromise with the demands of Nature in the companion treatise *Über das Erhabene* (On the Sublime), where even the veil is condemned as a concession to human weakness:

Away, then, with the misconceived delicacy and the soft effeminating taste that throws a veil over the stern countenance of reality, and that, in order to curry favour with the senses, utters lies about a pretended harmony between well-being and moral behaviour, of which the real world shows no trace. Let us confront evil fate face to face ... [29]

Here speaks the dramatist, who needs the uncompromising acceptance of harsh reality, rather than the lyrical poet. But even in the final of Schiller's Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man, his principal philosophical work, the concession which Goethe remembered concerns, at the most the form, not the content, of Schiller's words. 'Taste,' he writes, 'spreads its softening veil over our physical needs which, in their naked form, offend against the dignity of free spirits and thus hides from us our degrading kinship with matter behind a charming phantom of freedom.' [30]

Remember what Franz Moor had said in his cynical musings on the sexual act when he sneered at those who veil bestial reality with a fog of sanctity. Not that Schiller here sides with his villain, if he ever did; he is grateful for the existence of the veil; he wants reality to be hidden from us, not, as Franz Moor alleges, because of religious fears, but because of his persistent dread which, as we have seen, he continued to express in the poems of the same year that saw the completion of the Aesthetic Letters.

Yet there is also a poem, 'Die Weltweisen' ('The Philosophers', 1795), from the year in which he published 'The image of Sais' and 'The poetry of life', the first full year of his friendship with Goethe, in which we may see a concession to Goethe's plea for Nature, the Good Mother. It is a humorous poem in which Schiller puts the philosophers in their place because their speculations will never change art or reality:

*Doch weil, was ein Professor spricht,
Nicht gleich zu Allen dringet,
So übt Natur die Mutterpflicht
Und sorgt, dass nie die Kette bricht,
Und dass der Reif nie springet.
Einstweilen, bis den Bau der Welt
Philosophie zusammenhalt,
Erhält sie das Getriebe
Durch Hunger und durch Liebe.*

But since what a professor says
Will not be heard by all,
Nature a mother's duty does,
Makes certain that the chains don't break
And that the ring won't burst.
Pro tem before philosophers
Can make the world cohere,
She keeps the works in motion
Through hunger and through love.

You will not be surprised to learn that Sigmund Freud specially liked to quote these lines. Not that the sentiment expressed contradicts Schiller's other utterances; he had always acknowledged the power of Nature over her own dominion, which he saw as the domain of Necessity, of the law rather than of freedom. But maybe the contact with Goethe had really made him see that not everybody was as deeply disturbed by the pressures of instinct as he was. In the poem 'The realm of shadows', from which I have quoted, he had still posed the dilemma of human existence in the most uncompromising terms. Man, he said, had only the agonizing choice between sensual pleasure and spiritual peace; only Jove could combine them both." The Father of the Gods was obviously not troubled in his conscience while he enjoyed the embraces of his various loves in the most unlikely disguises. In Goethe, Schiller encountered, if not Jove himself, at least a human being whose serenity did not seem to be broken by his sensuality. The author of the joyfully erotic Roman Elegies showed no signs of being troubled by the degrading kinship with matter.

This contact with an undivided soul had a healing effect on Schiller.[32] He began to reflect on the difference he had found between their various gifts and modes of creation and used the result of this introspection for a typology of poets, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung (On Naive and Sentimental Poetry)*, in which Goethe, as the naive and unbroken genius, was to be ranked with the Greeks and indeed with Nature herself, while Schiller could still assign a place to himself as what he calls a *sentimentalischer*, a reflecting author, one, we surmise, who had peered behind the veil and shrunk back. I have called Schiller's poem 'Kassandra', which I quoted for its most uncompromising pessimism, a dramatic poem, the poem which links the lifting of the veil with the assertion that error only is life and knowledge death. It is perhaps dramatic in the sense of being a monologue, expressed in the full awareness that, like the Greek seer, he experienced what other people were spared.

It so happens that Goethe himself also used the image of the veil, in a highly significant context, a poem of dedication which was to introduce his mystical stanzas 'Die Geheimnisse' ('The secrets'), and which he later used as the dedication of his collected poems. Following the ancient precedent of describing allegorical encounters,[33] it tells of the poet's cheerful ascent on a spring morning when he is met by a divine figure who appears out of the gathering mists. He addresses her as the object of all his desire, the personification of Truth, and with a benevolent smile she stretches out her hands to gather in the fog that had covered the scene; she transforms it into a veil she now pulls from the landscape, handing it to the poet as her gift, with the promise that the happy man who receives it with a serene mind will never lack anything, for now he can work magic with that veil:

*Aus Morgenduft gewebt und Sonnenklarheit
Der Dichtung Schleier aus der Hand der Wahrheit.*

Woven from morning haze and solar radiance,
The veil of poetry from the hand of truth.

Truth bestows the magic veil of poetry on happy and serene souls, not to cover the terrors of existence, merely to offer relief when the heat of the day becomes oppressive.[34]

Goethe, who implicitly alluded to the motif of this Dedication in the untranslatable subtitle he gave to his autobiography — *Wahrheit and Dichtung*, which means both *Truth and Poetry* and *Truth and Fiction* — also transformed and transfigured the image of Schiller in the wonderful poetic monument he erected to his great friend, the 'Epilog zu Schillers Glocke' ('Epilogue to the lay of the bell'). He there pays tribute to Schiller's courage and faith which strove incessantly for 'the good to work, to grow and to prosper,/So that the day would dawn at last for the noble soul':

*Damit das Gute wirke, wachse, fromme,
Damit der Tag dem Edlen endlich komme.*

All of us who had a German education were conditioned by these lines to see in Schiller the optimistic idealist who had his eyes firmly fixed on the progress of humanity. It is with a shock that one comes to realize that this interpretation is flatly contradicted by Schiller's own profession of faith which he embodied in two poems, 'Die Worte des Glaubens' ('The words of faith', 1797) and 'Die Worte des Wahns' ('The words of delusion', 1799). While the first formulates his Kantian belief in the triad of Freedom, Virtue and Divinity, the other warns against the delusions of the age, the belief in the progress of mankind, in the justice of life and the possibility of ever discovering truth. Let this be the only one of Schiller's poems to be quoted in full.

*Drei Worte hört man, bedeutungschwer,
Im Munde der Guten und Besten;
Sie schallen vergeblich, ihr Klang ist leer,
Sie können nicht helfen und trösten:
Verscherzt ist dem Menschen des Lebens Frucht,
Solang er die Schatten zu haschen sucht.*

*Solang er glaubt an die Goldene Zeit,
Wo das Rechte, das Gute wird siegen —
Das Rechte, das Gute führt ewig Streit,
Nie wird der Feind ihm erliegen,
Und erstickst du ihn nicht in den Lüften frei,
Stets wächst ihm die Kraft auf der Erde neu.*

*Solang er glaubt, dass das buhlende Glück
Sich dem Edeln vereinigen werde,
Dem Schlechten folgt est mit Liebesblick;
Nicht dem Guten gehöret die Erde:
Er ist ein Fremdling, er wandert aus
Und suchet ein unvergänglich Haus.*

*Solang er glaubt, dass dem ird'schen Verstand
Die Wahrheit je wird erscheinen;
Ihren Schleier hebt keine sterbliche Hand,
Wir können nur raten und meinen:
Du kerkerst den Geist in ein tönend Wort,
Doch der freie wandelt im Sturme fort.*

*Drum, edle Seele, entreiss dich dem Wahn,
Und den himmlischen Glauben bewahre!
Was kein Ohr vernahm, was die Augen nicht sahn,
Est ist dennoch das Schöne, das Wahre!
Es ist nicht draussen, da sucht es der Tor,
Es ist in dir, du bringst es ewig hervor.*

Three words with a weighty meaning are heard
From the lips of the good and the best.
Their sound is hollow, they are spoken in vain,
They can neither help nor console,
And man must lose the fruits of his life
As long as these shadows he seeks to grasp.
While he places his trust in a golden age
When the right and the good will prevail.
The right, the good, are for ever at war,
Their opponent will never succumb.
For if you don't crush him right in mid-air
He will always gain strength as he touches the earth.
As long as he thinks that Fortuna, the whore, Will ever side with the noble,
The villain she follows with loving eyes,
This earth is not owned by the good.
He is an alien, he leaves his home
And seeks an imperishable abode.

As long as he thinks that at any time
The Truth will lie open to reason,
No mortal hand will lift that veil
We can but guess and believe.
You imprison the spirit in high sounding words,
But it freely moves on like the storm that bloweth.

Hence, noble soul, these delusions discard
But maintain the heavenly faith:
What no ear has heard, what no eyes have seen,
It is yet the fair and the true.
It is not outside, where fools look for it,
It is within you, you are its eternal creator.

Once more Truth is represented as veiled, but here Schiller reverts to the original meaning of that legendary inscription under the image of Isis, 'I am all that is, and that was, and that shall be, and no mortal hath raised the veil from before my face'. It must have been, for him, a consoling insight.

The story goes that Greek playwrights who had dramatized a myth, say, of the Fall of Troy or of Oedipus, for the Athenian Dionysiaca, were sometimes greeted with calls of protest that this had nothing to do with Dionysus. I fear I have exposed myself to the criticism that what I present here has nothing to do with psychoanalysis. I certainly do not lay bare for you the origins of Schiller's conflicts behind the veil of his poetry and thought. I am not even convinced that such an enterprise would be possible or fruitful, given the distance of time and the scarcity of evidence. But maybe I might plead in conclusion that the very problems and conflicts which Schiller attempted to objectify were germane to Freud's thoughts and interests. The force of instinct, the function of illusion, the values of civilization in our efforts to come to terms with life, were constant themes in his metapsychological reflections. After all, as I said earlier, Freud himself stemmed from the tradition that had also formed Schiller. True, Freud never lacked the courage to lift the veil, but he also had the humility to confess in a letter to Yvette Guilbert about the secrets of her artistic achievements: 'we know so little' ('man weiss ja so wenig').[35]

- [1] *Schiller Bibliographie*, by Wolfgang Vulpius *et al.* (Berlin, 1959-). Where I found references useful for the identification of passages I have cited by volume and page number the edition of Schiller's *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert (Munich, 1965), hereafter abbreviated as *SW*.
- [2] Humboldt's *Vorerinnerung über Schiller und den Gang seiner Geistesentwicklung* (1830) with which he prefaced his edition of their correspondence, *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Schiller und Wilhelm von Humboldt*, ed. Siegfried Seidel (Berlin, 1962).
- [3] Reprinted in *They asked for a Paper* (London, 1962), pp.120-38.
- [4] Freud, *Briefe, 1873-1939*, ed. Ernst L. Freud (Frankfurt am Main, 1960), p.332.
- [5] I have throughout translated from the edition, *Schillers Briefe*, ed. Fritz Jonas (Stuttgart [1892-1922]).
- [6] *Critique of Judgement*, translated by James Creed Meredith (Oxford, 1952), p.179. The ultimate source of the inscription is Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 354C. Its background and ramifications in eighteenth-century thought and imagery are fully explored in Pierre Hadot, 'Zur Idee der Naturgeheimnisse', *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, geistes- und sozialwissenschaftliche Klasse* (1982), no.8, pp.3-33, where there is also an illustration of Segner's frontispiece commended by Kant. I should like to thank Professor Ernst Kitzinger for having drawn my attention to this article.
- [7] *Die Sendung Moses*, *SW*, 4.792; Schiller also refers to the inscription in *Über das Erhabene (On the Sublime)*, *SW*, 5.508.
- [8] Herman Weigand, 'Schiller: Transfiguration of a Titan', in *A Schiller Symposium in Observance of the Bicentenary of Schiller's Birth*, ed. A. Leslie Wilson (Austin, Texas, 1960), p.93.
- [9] 'Und die Teufel schmollten' does not mean 'and the devils sulked' as it would in modern German, but that they smiled or grinned. See Heinrich Viehoff, *Schillers Gedichte erläutert* (Stuttgart, 1887), p.77.
- 10 For this and the following see Kenneth Dewhurst and Nigel Reeves, *Friedrich Schiller: Medicine, Psychology and Literature* (Oxford, 1978), to which I am much indebted.
- [11] *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (New York, 1952), p.29.
- [12] Cf. Wolfgang Düssing, *Begriffsregister zu den theoretischen Schriften*, issued as an appendix to *SW*.
- [13] The transition seemed no doubt natural from the ancient cosmological doctrine that it is 'love that moves the heavens' to the identification of this mutual love with Newtonian attraction.
- [14] In his early report on the psychological afflictions of a fellow student, Grammont, Schiller attributes the deep depressions of his patient largely to his tormenting metaphysical doubts. See *Schillers Leben dokumentarisch*, ed. Walter Hoyer (Cologne, 1967), p.47.
- [15] 'Sehet also, das ist die ganze Hexerei, die ihr mit einem heiligen Nebel verschleiert, unsre Furchtsamkeit zu missbrauchen' (act 1, scene 1).
- [16] Act 4, scene 2.4.
- [17] *Schillers Leben dokumentarisch*, pp.111-12.
- [18] Her name was Luise Dorothea Vischer; cf. the index to *Schillers Leben dokumentarisch*. For Schiller's relation to women see also Emil Staiger, *Friedrich Schiller* (Zürich, 1967), pp.17-18.
- [19] *SW*, 5.339, 341.
- [20] *Sie selbst, die sanfte Cypria, Umleuchtet von der Feuerkrone, Steht dann vor ihrem mündgen Sohne, Entschleiert — als Urania ...*
- [21] The best and most sympathetic introduction to Schiller's aesthetics known to me is the bilingual and richly annotated edition of the letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford, 1967), with its masterly introduction.
- [22] In his letter to Goethe of 12 September 1794 Schiller attributes this Burkean view to his visitor Ramdohr.
- [23] *Über das Pathetische (On the Pathetic)*, *SW*, 5.516.
- [24] I ventured to attempt a verse translation of two of its stanzas in my lecture on Raphael's Madonna

della Sedia, *Norm and Form* (Oxford, 1966), p.70.

[25] Cited note 10 above.

[26] Cited note 18 above.

[27] *Einwirkungen der neuem Philosophie*, in *Zur Naturwissenschaft im Allgemeinen, Goethes Werke*, ed. Dorothea Kuhn and Rike Wankmüller (Munich, 1953-), 13.28-9. There is a parallel account in Goethe's *Annalen oder Tag- und Jahreshefte* on the year 1794, in which Goethe confesses to have suspected certain 'harsh passages' in *Über Anmut und Würde (On Grace and Dignity)* to have been aimed at him, but to have felt that matters were even worse if that was not the case, for then the enormous gulf that separated his mode of thinking from that of Schiller was even more apparent.

[28] *SW*, 5.462-3.

[29] *SW*, 5.806.

[30] 'Dafür breitet er über das physische Bedürfnis, das in seiner nackten Gestalt die Würde freier Geister beleidigt, seinen mildernden Schleier aus und verbirgt uns die entehrende Verwandtschaft mit dem Stoff in einem lieblichen Blendwerk von Freiheit.' I have somewhat departed from the translation by Wilkinson and Willoughby (p.218); who ingeniously render 'mildernder Schleier' as 'veil of decorum' and 'Blendwerk' as 'illusion'. But the latter German term carries stronger overtones; it is most often associated with black magic (*Blendwerk der Hölle*), and so I have 'proposed 'phantom'.

[31] *Zwischen Sinnenglick und Seelenfrieden*

Bleibt dem Menschen nur die bange Wahl;

Auf der Stirn des hohen Uraniden

Leuchtet ihr vermählter Strahl.

[32] In her Special Taylorian Lecture *Schiller, Poet or Philosopher?* (Oxford, 1961), Elizabeth M. Wilkinson speaks of the 'healing give and take' of this friendship.

[33] I have discussed such a correspondence in my article 'Goethe's "Zueignung" and Benivieni's "Amore"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 1 (1937-8), though I probably over-emphasized the parallel.

[34] For Goethe's various uses of the symbol of the veil see Wilhelm Emrich, *Die Symbolik von Faust II* (Frankfurt am Main, 1964).

[35] 8 March 1931, *Briefe, 1873-1939*, p.400.