

The Artists

(1789)

Friedrich Schiller

Friedrich Schiller wrote “The Artists” in the momentous year of 1789, at thirty years of age, in the same year in which he delivered his inaugural lecture as Professor of History at Jena University, on the subject “What Is, and to What End Do We Study, Universal History?” It was a year much like 1989, when tyranny crumbled around the world and Friedrich Schiller’s “Ode to Joy” was the theme song of a peaceful revolution. In 1789, the United States Constitution created a nation committed to securing “the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.” In Europe, where Schiller and his fellow republicans were following the American events with great interest, 1789 marked the beginning of the French Revolution, which Schiller called the “generous moment,” and to which he looked with hope for a new birth of freedom on the European continent.

(Of course, Schiller was to be bitterly disappointed by the unfolding of the French Revolution, in which he said that the “generous moment” had found a “little people”—much as today, with wars and poverty spreading in the former communist lands, we rue the lost opportunity of 1989.)

Schiller was a leading actor in these unfolding events, and



Detail from a 19th-century American lithograph.

“The Artists” is Schiller’s greatest poetic treatment of the idea proclaimed on the masthead of *Fidelio*: “It is through beauty that one proceeds to freedom.” This was the idea which he hoped would positively transform political leaders and freedom fighters in their battles against the “principalities and powers” arrayed against freedom worldwide.

This “thought-poem,” Helga Zepp-LaRouche wrote recently (*Fidelio*, Vol. III, No. 4, Winter 1994), “elaborates the fundamental theme, through which Schiller, in continuously escalating images and metaphors, demonstrates how beauty and art are capable of raising the human being to ever new stirrings of the heart and heights of reason. And by describing this development, he himself creates the

idea of which he speaks. The reader is caught up by the excited power of imagination of the poet, and thus leaps over the chasm which apparently lies between the different steps on this path, so that the reader can relive how art becomes the ‘second Creator of man.’ ”

The translator of this poem is therefore confronted with a twofold challenge: Not only must he render the ideas—the content of the poem—in an intelligible way, but he must capture the style—embodied in the rhythm, the meter, the

rhyme, etc.—which conveys the ideas; and he must do so BEAUTIFULLY, because it is through beauty that poetry does its work.

Schiller himself, in a famous passage from “Kallias, or On the Beautiful,” (letter to Gottfried Körner, Feb. 19, 1793), specified what is required to render an artistic creation beautiful:

The perfect, presented with freedom, is immediately transformed into the beautiful. It is, however, presented with freedom, when the nature of the thing appears harmonizing with its technique, when it looks as if it were flowing forth voluntarily from the thing itself. One can also briefly express the preceding so: An object is perfect when everything manifold in it accords with the unity of its concept; it is beautiful when its perfection appears as nature.

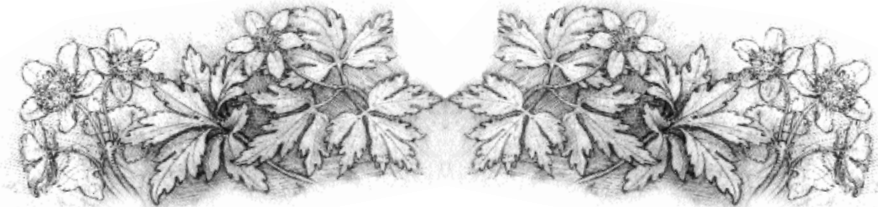
The Schiller Institute undertook to translate the major works of Friedrich Schiller into English beginning in 1985, as a leading part of our effort to create a new Golden Renaissance. But translating Schiller well—and particularly his more difficult works, such as “The Artists”—requires, as Beethoven testified in his lifelong struggle to set Schiller to music, at least the same quality of poetic genius that Schiller himself embodied—or at least a genuine appreciation of that genius.

Yet at the same time, the reward for the effort is tremendous. I undertook the task because the English-speaking world REQUIRES a translation which is true both to Schiller’s words, and to the beauty with which he conveyed them. Struggling to capture Schiller’s poetic conception and style elevates the translator to the heights of mental activity that can only be described by Schiller’s concept of “Götterfunken”—Godly sparks. There, the translator enters into Schiller’s mind, if only for brief moments, and, if he is truly fortunate, is granted that experience identified by Lyndon LaRouche as man’s God-like image of creation.

I began this translation more than three years ago, with an eye to the many Schiller Institute leaders serving years in prison for their belief in truth, and willingness to sacrifice for it. Their courage in the face of injustice, and their continuing fight for beauty in the midst of ugliness, should inspire us all to strive to bring beauty into our distressed world. Their courage would have made Friedrich Schiller joyful.

Now, more than ever before, our people NEED the ideas of Friedrich Schiller, to preserve that legacy of 1789 bequeathed to us at so great a cost. May this translation help to lighten the days of our imprisoned colleagues, and bring us all to freedom!

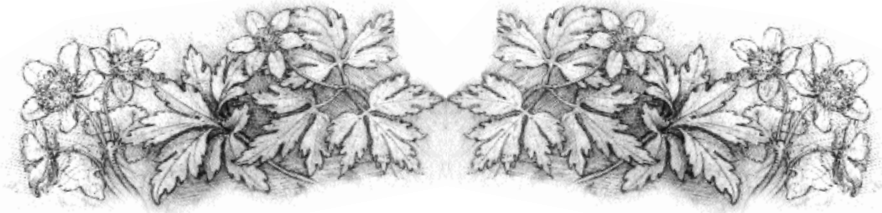
*—Marianna Wertz,
January 1, 1995*



THE ARTISTS

HOW BEAUTIFUL, O Man, your palm branch
 holding
You stand at century’s unfolding,
In proud and noble manhood’s prime,
With faculties revealed, with spirit’s fullness,
Full earnest mild, in action-wealthy stillness,
The ripest son of time,
Free through reason, strong through law’s measures,
Through meekness great and rich in treasures,
Which long your breast to you did not disclose,
Nature’s own lord, who loves your chaining fetters
Who in a thousand battles trains your powers
And splendent under you from out the wild arose!

BESOT WITH vict’ry operose,
To praise the hand be not forgotten,
Which on life’s desolated strand
The whimpering, abandoned orphan,
A savage Fortune’s booty, found,
Which to your young heart quietly and early
Its future dignity of spirit did display,
And the besoiling lust already
From your most tender bosom turned away,
Beneficent, the one who taught you
In youth the lofty duties playfully,
To guess in easy riddles that she brought you
Exalted virtue’s secret mystery,



Who, more mature to see him on returning,
In foreign arms her darling one she laid,
O fall not, with degenerated yearning
Unto the level of her lowly maids!
In labor can the bee you master,
In skillfulness a worm be as your teacher known,
Your knowledge you do share with other spirits vaster,
But *Art*, O Man, you have alone!

'TWAS BUT through Beauty's morning-entrance
That you the land of knowledge gained
To make accustomed greater brilliance,
The mind on charms must first be trained.
The sound which Muses' strings so cherished
With trembling sweet throughout you poured,
The strength within your breast has nourished
Which later to the world-soul soared.

WHAT, AFTER many thousand years' subsiding,
The reason, now grown older found,
Was to the childlike mind revealed, abiding
In symbols of the beautiful and grand.
To virtue's love her gracious image bade us,
A gentle mind did base depravity oppose,
Ere yet a Solon wrote the Law he made us,
Which languid blossoms slowly grows.
Long ere the thinker's spirit daring
Had of eternal space conceived,
Who to the starry theater staring,
Ne'er its presentiment perceived?

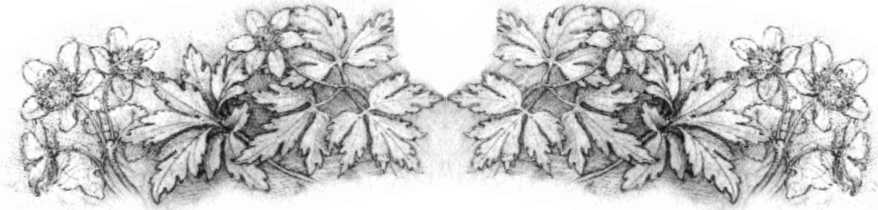
SHE, WITH Orions in a halo glowing
Around her face in lordly majesty,
To only pure daemonic spirits showing,
Empassioned goes o'er starry sky,
From sunny throne escape she's taken,
Urania, so dreadful yet so grand,
Her crown ablazing now foresaken
Does she—as *Beauty* 'fore us stand.
The belt of grace round her receiving,
Becomes a child, thus understood by youth:
What here as *Beauty* we're perceiving,
In future will encounter us as *Truth*.

WHEN FROM his countenance the heavenly Creator
All humans to mortality expelled,
And to the light, a reappearance later
To find on senses' heavy path compelled,
When turned from Man the faces of the host of heaven
Went she, the essence of humanity,
With all the banished and forsaken,
Magnanimously, to mortality.
Here she in bounded flight does hover,
Around her love near land of senses' thrall,
And paints deceiving as a lover
Elysium upon his prison wall.

WHEN IN this nurse's arms so tender
A fragile mankind still reposed,
There holy bloodlust stirred up not an ember,
There guiltless blood was not exposed.
The heart, which she with gentle strings is guiding,
Disdains the servile Duty's company;
Her path of light, more lovely coiled, abiding
In solar orbit of morality.
Those who her service chaste inhabit,
No baser urges tempt, no fates affright;
Just as the holy power first did grant it
Receive they back the pure life of the spirit,
The which is freedom's sweetest right.

HOW BLISSFUL they whom she into her serving—
Of multitudes the purest—does ordain,
Within whose breast she deemed her throne deserving
Through whose mouth rule the mighty their domain,
Whom she selected at e'er-flaming altars,
To see her holy fire never falters,
Without a veil appeared she only to their eye,
Whom she in tender union would ally!
Then in the place so full of honor revel,
Which lofty order has to you assigned:
In the exalted universe of mind
You were humanity's first level.

ERE TO THE world you first proportion brought,
Served joyfully by every being—
A form unmeasured, in black crepe of evening wrought,



Draws near to him, lit up by languid beaming,
A myriad of warring forms,
Which held his mind in slavery's fixation,
Unsociable like him and coarse,
With thousand powers aimed upon his station,
—Thus 'fore the savage stood Creation.
Through fetters blind of appetite's control
To mere appearances restricted,
Escapes him, never felt and e'er untasted,
Fair Nature's beauty-laden soul.

AND AS SHE fleeting overhead now stole,
You caught the friendly shadows in your tether
With tender mind, with quiet hand,
And learned how in harmonious band
To bring them sociably together.
So lightly floating felt the view
To cedar's slender shapes upward projected;
The crystal waves obligingly reflected
Your shimm'ring image back to you.
How could you miss the lovely intimation,
With which benevolently Nature toward you drew?
The art to steal her shadow through an imitation,
The image floating on the waves displayed to you.
Her very being parted from her,
Her own fair phantom self, a dream,
She threw into the silver stream,
In order to entice her robber.
The beaut'ous pow'r to form was wakened in your
breast.
Too noble yet, not to conceive at leisure,
In sand, in clay you have the lovely shadow traced
In outline catching its essential treasure.
The sweet desire for action lively woke—
From out your breast the first creation broke.

HELD UNDER searching contemplation
Entangled by your watchful sight,
Familiar forms gave forth in revelation
The talisman, through which they brought delight.
The wonder-working laws, the measure
Of charm's intensely sought-out treasure
In easy bond were by inventive mind
Within your handiwork combined.
The obelisk and pyramid ascended,

The herm arose, the column sprang on high,
The forest's melody from reedy pipe flowed by,
And heroes' deeds in singing never ended.

THE SAMPLING of a flower bed
Is bound in nosegay with a sage selection,
Thus out of Nature did the first Art tread;
Now nosegays are into a wreath wound in collection,
And thus a second, higher Art began
From the creations formed by Man.
The child of Beauty, by your fingers made
Full self-sufficient, already perfected,
Does lose the crown its brow arrayed
When its reality's effected.
The pillar must, unto proportion bent,
Close with its neighborly sisters in formation,
Proclaimed by Maenad harp's laudation,
The hero must in hero host be blent.

SOON GATHERED round barbarians, astounded
To see the new creations forth they ran.
Look, the delighted crowd resounded,
Look there, all this was done by Man!
As merry and more social pairs abounded,
They soon were seized by singer's lyre,
Who titans, warring giants celebrated
And lion-slayers, who, as singer did inspire,
Transformed their hearers into heroes feted.
The *spirit* then the first time does partake
Of joys more peaceful, reassuring,
Which are but from afar alluring,
Which don't the greed within its being wake,
Which though enjoyed aren't disappearing.

NOW FROM its mental sleep did wrestle
The soul, so beautiful and free,
By you unfettered sprang the vassal
Of cares into the lap of joy to be.
Now bestiality's close limits lifted,
Humanity on his unclouded brow came out,
And thought, the foreigner exalted,
From his astonished brain sprang out.
Now *stood* Man, and to starry legions
Displayed his kingly countenance,
Then to these lofty sunlit regions



His thanks conveyed through speaking glance.
Upon his cheek did smiling flower,
The voice's soulful, tender play
Unfolded into song's full power,
Emotions swam in his wet eye,
And jest, with praise in graceful federation,
His lips poured out with animation.

ENTOMBED IN instincts worms inherit,
In carnal pleasure fully pressed,
You recognized within his breast
The noble seed of love for spirit.
That from what senses base inherit
Could better seed of love break rank,
He has first shepherd's song to thank.
Unto thought's dignity ennobled
An appetite more modest flooded
From singer's mouth in fair refrain.
The dew-dropped cheeks were gently burning,
This steadfast, unextinguished yearning
Did union of the souls proclaim.

THE WISEST OF the wise, the mild one's mildness,
The strong one's power, nobility's grace,
You wed into a *single* likeness
And did within a halo place.
The man who 'fore the Unknown quivered,
Now its reflection came to love;
And splendid heroes hotly simmered,
To match the Being great above.
From arch'type of all Beauty the first sounding
You made in Nature to be full resounding.

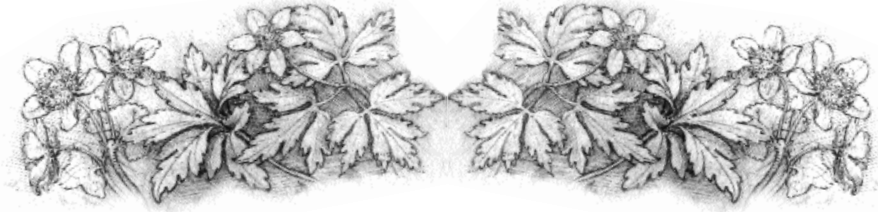
THE PASSIONS' frenzied, wild stress,
The lawless games of Fortune,
The instincts' and the duties' press
You set, with judgmental emotion,
By strict law toward their destination.
What in her great and grand procession, Nature
In widespread distances has torn in twain,
Becomes in song and in the theater
An ordered, lightly linking chain.
By Furies' frightful song affected,
The murder draws, though ne'er detected,
The lot of death from their refrain.

Long ere the sages venture with their finding,
An Iliad has fortune's enigmatic winding
For young antiquity unfurled;
In quiet, Thespis' coach descending,
Slipped Providence into the world.

BUT IN THE great course of the world
Too early was your symmetry ascending.
When darksome hand of Destiny,
What she before your eye had raveled,
Would not before your eye untie,
Then life to the abyss did fly,
Ere it the beaut'ous circle traveled—
Then you did draw, with your own daring might,
The arc still further into future's night;
Then hurled yourself and never quivered
Into Avernus' pitch-black ocean wave
And there that life again discovered
That fled beyond the urn and grave;
Then there appeared, with torch o'erturned, the image:
Of blooming Pollux, leaning there on Castor nigh,
The shadow that is in the lunar visage,
Ere beaut'ous silver circle fills on high.

BUT HIGHER still, to heights yet ever higher
Creating genius soared to be.
Creations new creations one already sees inspire,
From harmonies comes harmony.
What here delights besotten eye alone,
Serves there submissively the higher Beauty;
The charm which does this nymph adorn,
In a divine Athena blends most gently:
The powers which in wrestler's muscle climb,
Must in the god's great beauty keep sweet silence;
The figure of proud Jove, the wonder of his time,
Must in Olympic temple bow in rev'rence.

THE WORLD, transformed by labor's hand,
The human heart, moved forth by new impulses,
Which train it in hot battles' pulses,
Do your creation's scope expand.
Progressing, grateful Man upwards is bringing,
On wings exalted, Art with him on high,
And worlds of beauty new are springing
From Nature which is richer made thereby.



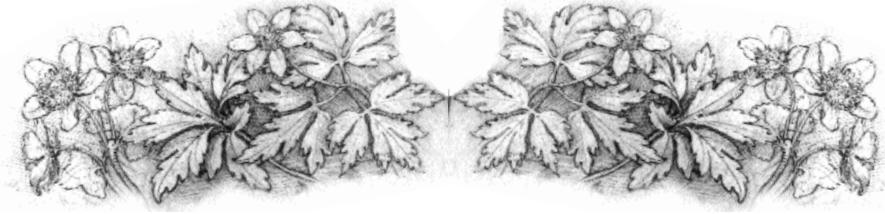
The bounds of knowledge fall away,
The mind, which in your vict'ries easy
Is trained, with pleasures which do ripen quickly
Through artificial world of charms to scamper,
Does Nature's distant pillars now discover,
And overtakes her on her darksome way.
He weighs her now with weights of Man's creation,
Metes here with *measures* she herself has lent;
Much better versed in Beauty's obligation,
To pass before his eye she must be sent.
In self-complacent, youthful joy he raises
In loan unto the spheres his harmony,
The universal edifice he praises
So splendid 'tis through symmetry.

NOW ALL the life that him embraces
Does tell him of proportion fair.
The golden belt of Beauty laces
So mildly in his life's course there;
The blest Perfection round him chases
Triumphantly in your works everywhere.
Wherever joy sonorous hurries,
Wherever quiet sorrow flees,
Where thoughtful contemplation tarries,
Where tears of misery he sees,
Where thousand frights at him are 'raying;
There follow streams of harmony,
He sees the goddess Graces playing
And struggles in refined and quiet feeling
After the lovely company.
So softly, as lines charming coil together,
As all appearances he sees
In softened contour blend in one another,
His life's light breath now thither flees.
His spirit melts in Harmony's great ocean,
Which round his mind voluptuously flows
And thought, enraptured, quietly does close
On ever-present Cytherea in devotion.
Within high unity with Destiny,
In calmness leaning on the Muses and the Graces,
His friendly breast exposed obligingly,
Receives the shot which toward him presses
From off the soft bow of Necessity.

THE TRUSTED favorites of blessed Harmony,
Companions who to gladden life have striven,
The noblest and the dearest, those which she,
Who gave us life, that we might live, has given!
That the unshackled Man now of his duties *thinks*,
Does love what guides him, fetters' links,
Not prey to iron scepter of contingency,
This thanks you—your eternity,
And a sublime reward your heart does carry.
That round the cup in which our freedom runs,
The gods of joy do jest so merry,
The pleasant dream so lovely spins,
For this full lovingly embraced be.

THE SPIRIT splendent and serene,
Who cloaked Necessity in graceful cover,
Who to his starry vault, his heav'nly ether
Does bid us serve with gracious mien,
Who, where he frightens, with Sublimity's enchanting
And to destruction his adornment's granting,
This Artist great you emulate.
As on the brooklet's glassy slate
The bright-hued banks a-dancing glimmer
With sunset's glow and flow'ry field,
So on our barren life does shimmer
The poem's lively shadow-world.
You have to us, as bride garmented,
The frightening Unknown presented,
The Destiny without relent.
Just as your urns the bones do cover,
You place a sweet enchantment over
The sorrows' chorus dread lament.
Through thousand years I've hurried,
In boundless realm of ages past:
How mankind laughs where'er you've tarried,
How sad he lies when you have passed!

WHO ONCE with fleeting feathers upward
Full force, from your creating hands did climb,
Again itself within your arms discovered,
When through the silent victory of time
From off its cheeks life's rosy flower,



The strength from out its members stole
And sadly, steps now lacking power,
The old man staggered on his pole.
Then you from fountain freshly rendered
A wave of life to thirsty tendered.
Twice did the epoch gain its youth anew,
Twice from the seed which you yourself did strew.

BY SAVAGE hordes expatriated,
You snatched the last fire offering away
From Orient's fair altars desecrated
And brought it to the Occident to stay.
There dawned the beaut'ous fugitive much feted,
The new day, from the East, now in the West,
And on Hesperia's meadows germinated
Ionia's renewed and blooming best.
Into the souls did cast more beaut'ous Nature
Soft mirroring, a beautiful reflection bright,
And into the bejewelled souls did enter
Resplendently, the goddess great of light.
One saw the falling of a million shackles,
And for the slaves the rights of Man averred,
As brother peacefully with brother travels,
So mildly has the younger race matured.
With inner, higher joy inspired
You taste the given happiness
And in humility attired
Withdraw with merit's silentness.

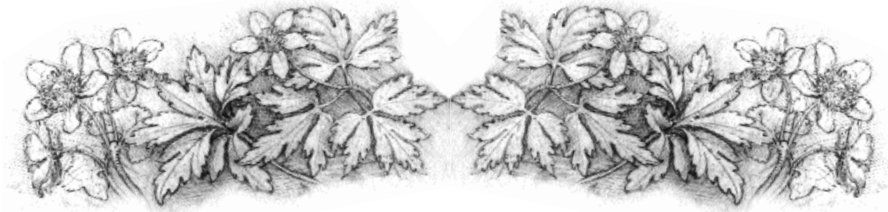
IF, ON THE paths of thought without obstruction
The inquirer now wanders, fortune bold,
And, drunk with vict'ry's paeans' loud eruption,
He rashly thrusts his hand the crown to hold;
If he with hireling's meager wages
Does think his noble leader he can shed
And by the throne, dreamed o'er the ages,
Of Art, lets stand the first slave post instead:
Forgive him—in its brilliant stages
Perfection's crown does hover o'er your head.
With you, the spring's first blooming flower,
Soul-forming Nature has her work begun;
With you, the joyous harvest's bower,
Is self-perfecting Nature done.

WHAT FROM the clay, from stone did first emerge so
humbly,
Creative Art, encompasses with quiet vict'ry
The mind's unmeasured, vast domain.
What in the knowledge land discov'ers conquer only,
Discover they, for you the conquest gain.
The treasures, which the thinker has collected,
Will only in your arms first joy impart,
When first his science, into beauty ripe perfected,
Will be ennobled to a work of art—
When he does to the hilltop with you sally,
And to his eye, in evening's mildly shining part,
Is suddenly revealed—the vivid valley.

MORE RICHLY you do satisfy his fleeting vision,
More beaut'ous, higher are the orders which the mind
Can fly through in *one* magic union,
Can circumscribe in *one* enjoyment blind,
The wider ope are thoughts and feelings staying
To harmonies' more sumpt'ous interplaying
To stream of Beauty's richer, fuller span—
More beaut'ous members of the universal plan,
Which, mutilated, spoil now his creation,
He sees the high Forms then bring to perfection,
More beaut'ous step the riddles from the night,
The richer will the world be he embraces,
The broader streams the sea in which he chases,
The weaker grows the Destiny's blind might,
The higher are his urges striving,
The smaller he becomes, the greater grows his loving.

SO LEAD him, hidden pathway show,
Through tones of music pure, forms ever purer,
Through higher heights and beauty yet more beaut'ous ever
Up poem's floral ladder softly go—
At last, at time's ripe destination,
Yet one more happy inspiration sage,
Poetic flight of mankind's youngest age,
And—he into the arms of Truth will hasten.

HERSELF, the gentle Cypria,
Illumined by her crown so fiery,



Then stands before her son grown fully
Unveiled—as Urania;
The quicker only by him captured
More *beaut'ous* he from her once flown!
So sweet, so blissfully enraptured
Once stood Ulysses' noble son,
When his divine companion as a youngster
Was then transfigured to Jove's daughter.

THE DIGNITY of Man into your hands is given—
Its keeper be!
It sinks with you! With you it will be risen!
The sacred magic of poetry
A world-plan wise serves with devotion,
In quiet steer it toward the ocean
Of the great harmony!

LET EARNEST Truth, by her own time rejected,
Escape to Poetry to be protected
And shelter find in Muses' choir.
In highest fullness of her splendor,
More frightful in the charming cover,
Let her arise with song abounding
And 'venge herself with triumph sounding
On her pursuer's coward's ear.

YOU FREE sons of the freest mother,
Swing upward with a constant face,
And strive then after no crown other,
To highest Beauty's radiant place!
The sister whom you lost here early
In mother's lap you soon will see;
What beaut'ous souls have felt with beauty
Must excellent and perfect be.
Uplift yourselves on wings emboldened
High o'er your epoch's course be drawn,
Afar see in your mirror goldened
The coming century's fair dawn!
On twisted, thousandfold paths chasing,
So rich in multiplicity,
Come forward, then, with arms embracing
Round throne of the high unity!
As into gentle beams of seven
Breaks up the lovely shimmer white,
As also rainbow beams of seven
Dissolve into white beams of light:
So, play in thousandfolded clarity,
Enchanted round the heady sight,
So flow back in *one* band of verity,
Into *one* single stream of light!

—translated by Marianna Wertz



Two Epigrams by Friedrich Schiller

THE FOUNTAIN OF REJUVENATION

Trust me, it is no fable, the fountain of youth, it is running
Truly and always. Ye ask, where? In poetical art.

TWO KINDS OF ACTION

Work the good, and humanity's godlike plant dost thou *nourish*,
From the beautiful, thou strew'st *seeds* of the godlike abroad.

—translated by William F. Wertz, Jr.