

FRIEDRICH WILHELM JOSEPH VON SCHELLING
1775-1854

“Antwort auf das voranstehende Schreiben” *Allgemeine Zeitschrift von Deutschen für Deutsche* 1:1 (Jan 1813) 79-129.

Private collection, Canada

A single leaf from this article found its way into an album compiled by an American collector of autographs that was later broken up for sale item by item. On the same page as C’s annotation is a note in another hand, “Coleridge—Given by Revd Dr Ogilby | rare and valuable”.

In 1809, Schelling had published *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände*, his major work on the subject of human freedom. His colleague Eschenmayer—some of whose works C also annotated—challenged him in a long letter dated 18 Oct 1810 which Schelling included in the first number of his new periodical in 1813, followed by his own “Answer”. (The figures in parentheses in textus refer to specific paragraphs in Eschenmayer’s preceding article.) C makes only one clear allusion to this exchange: in DE WETTE 9, written after 1822, he declares that “Much as I dislike Schelling’s Jesuitical character, and wholly as I reject his system as far as it is *his*; yet I find his reply to Eschenmayer respecting this pretended Glaubenskraft [power of faith]. . . quite unanswerable.”

C is known to have annotated two other periodical publications ed by Schelling—see JAHR-BÜCHER and ZEITSCHRIFT—besides several separate SCHELLING titles, but this fragment is of interest both as previously unknown marginalia and as evidence of C’s extensive reading in the debates around *Naturphilosophie* and contemporary German philosophy.

DATE. 1813-15 when C was reading Schelling intensively; or later, possibly after he requested all the works of Schelling that he did not already have from a bookseller, 31 Aug 1816: CL IV 665.

[1 104 | C’s note, lightly cropped](#)

Wie schon ehemals meynen Sie überhaupt auch jetzt wieder sich besonders der Sittlichkeit gegen mein System annehmen zu müssen, das nach Ihnen für Pflicht, Recht, Gewissen und Tugend keine Stelle hat (22). Ich könnte Ihnen zwar diess leich erwie-

dem. Ich könnte fragen, welche Früchte für die Moral die Vermuthung tragen kann, dass der Mensch auf Erden nur ein Schauspieler seyn könnte, den die Sonne schickt und abrufft, wie sie (die Sonne) es für gut hält (46), oder jene romanenhafte Unsterblichkeit (31), wonach wir die höheren Sterne als die Schauplätze unsrer künftigen Metamorphosen zu betrachten haben, oder auch, dass Ihrer ganzen Philosophie die Idee einer Geisterwelt so völlig fremd ist? Diess erhellt aus dem mitgetheilten Schema (21) Ihres Systems. Eine negative Seite des Verstandes, welche die Natur, eine positive, welche die Geschichte ist, (auch die “höhere Ordnung der Dinge” genannt, als gäbe es keine andre!); in der Mitte beyder die Kunst; das ist alles! Doch, wie gesagt, ich liebe solche Folgerungen überhaupt nicht, weil es sich von selbst versteht, dass, was theoretisch betrachtet irrig oder unkräftig ist, auch nothwendig moralisch kraftlos oder irreführend seyn muss.

[Yet again you think you have to raise objections to my system particularly on moral grounds, claiming that it has no place for duty, right, conscience, or virtue (22). Yet I could easily turn the tables on you. I could ask, what moral advantage is to be gained from the supposition that man on earth can be no more than a player whom the sun sends out and calls back as it (the sun) pleases (46); or from some fantastical immortality (31) according to which we are to view the higher stars as the stages for our future metamorphoses; or even that the idea of a realm of spirits is so completely foreign to your whole philosophy. This is plain to see from the outline of your system that you have communicated (21): a negative aspect of the understanding, which is “nature”; a positive one, which is “history” (also called the “higher order of things”, as if there were no other!); between the two of them, art—and that is all! As I have said, however, I don’t like such conclusions at all, because it is self-evident that whatever is erroneous or weak, considered at a theoretical level, must also necessarily be feeble or misleading, at a moral level.]

This is noble and worthy of Schelling—but I cannot get over the quibbling, [w]hich he [h]imself [h]ad so [se]verely [cri]ticiped [in] Fichte’s [Ap]peal.¹ [W]hy not [ha]ve said this [at] first? [“I] am not [spe]aking of [G]-d; but [t]he forms, which [h]e willed [r]eveal [h]imself [?]in his [?]cre]atures.”² [B]ut [m]ore, [a]ssuredly, more was meant!

¹ In 1799, fighting back against charges of atheism that incited heated debate and eventually forced him to leave his position at Jena, Fichte published his “Appeal”, the *Appellation an das Publikum*, which attracted even more criticism, from Schelling among others. C owned a copy of this work, possibly in a Latin translation: *CN III 4307*. He also owned and annotated what he

described in *BL ch 9 (CC) I 164* as the “small pamphlet against Fichte” of 1806 in which Schelling’s objections are concentrated: see *SCHELLING Darlegung*.

² The missing letters might be “fe”, making “features”, or even “n”, making “natures”.