

The Spirit of Integral Poetry: “Waring” the Symbolism of Organism
By Matthew David Segall
For Prof. Eric Weiss, Fall 2011



When the Morning Stars Sang Together by William Blake

Introduction

In the preface of his magisterial account of the evolution of consciousness, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985), Jean Gebser warns of a crisis “of decisive finality for life on earth and for humanity,” a spiritual crisis heralding the end of the deficient mentality of the present age and the coming of an entirely transformed constellation of consciousness.¹ Although his research points to manifestations of this new *integral* constellation of consciousness in a variety of disciplines—including mathematics, physics, biology, psychology, philosophy, jurisprudence, sociology, economics, music, architecture, and painting--Gebser highlights *poetry* in particular as necessarily at the forefront of his inquiry. An inquiry into the nature of poetry, past and present, “is the most instructive means for disclosing the respective consciousness structure.”² Gebser quotes Alfred North Whitehead in support of such an inquiry, who suggests that “the most concrete outlook of humanity receives its expression” in poetry, and that it is to poetry that we must look “if we hope to discover the inward thoughts of a generation.”³

Poetry is the linguistically shaped and structured statement, by the human spirit, of a power rooted in the “primal depths of the universe.”⁴ Poetic statement, according to Gebser, is today under a new obligation to render origin perceptible to human awareness. Integral poetry, unlike its mythic and mental forerunners, cannot merely order the soul by contemplating the Muses, *it must now raise humanity to the “order of the spirit.”*⁵ Spirit, according to Valéry (whose poetry is cited by Gebser as an inception of the integral constellation) is not a “metaphysical entity,” but

¹ p. xxvii, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985)

² p. 317, *ibid.*

³ p. 94, *Science and the Modern World* (1932)

⁴ p. 316, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985)

⁵ p. 327, *ibid.*

a “power of transformation.”⁶ The creative power of spirit, which is humanity’s consciousness of origin, cannot be captured by the dead prose of reflective thought. Spirit is alive and effective only in the transparency of poetic statements.

Though Gebser draws on Ernst Cassirer’s research into mythic consciousness several times in the *Ever-Present Origin*, he ultimately finds his thinking one-sided, “indirectly [affording] more insight into rational...than into...mythical thinking.”⁷ Keeping Gebser’s criticism in mind, Cassirer’s perspective on the symbolic form of language is nonetheless instructive. Summarizing the Romantic philosophies of Herder, Schelling, and W. von Humboldt, Cassirer writes:

“...the essence of language never resides in those elements isolated by abstraction and analysis, but solely in the spirit’s eternally repeated endeavor to make the articulated sound an expression of thought.”⁸

This conception of language as a *holistic activity* or *process*, rather than an isolable sequence of elements amenable to reflective analysis, is characteristic of Romantic philosophy. In the context of Gebser’s structural scheme, “philosophy” may not be the best term to describe what the Romantics were up to. Friedrich Schlegel, for example, sought to transform philosophy into “transcendental poetry,” a form of thought that is no longer the expression of an individual artist or thinker, but becomes “the universe itself, the one work of art which is forever perfecting itself.”⁹ Novalis similarly suggested that poetry is the measure of a work’s truth and reality.¹⁰ The perspectival basis of philosophy, according to Gebser, ties it to the ego and its dualistic forms of

⁶ p. 326, *ibid.*

⁷ p. 246, note 8, *ibid.*

⁸ p. 160, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol. I: Language* (1955)

⁹ p. 156, *An Essay on Man* by Ernst Cassirer (1944)

¹⁰ *ibid.*

ontological, phenomenological, or existential representation: “The age of systematic philosophy of an individual stamp is over.”¹¹ What is needed are not more philosophemes, but *eteologemes*. *Eteon* is a Greek word meaning both “true” and “real.” Eteology is a form of statement that is more than magically evocative, mythically contemplative, or mentally explanatory; it is “being-in-truth,” allowing origin to shine through all the structures, making them transparent in the present by sustaining the verity of the whole.¹² The Romantics, in seeking to transform philosophy into poetry, were after precisely such a systatic mode of thinking. “When lovers--and the poets--[are realized to be] far more learned than the scholars are,” writes Novalis, “and tales and poetry provide to real world-history the guide,” then “world to free life can return.”¹³ This, according to Gebser, is a description of the aperspectival world.

In turning to the Romantics’ poetic eteology, I hope to build upon the irruptions of integral consciousness that their work exemplifies. Gebser does not dwell upon the Romantics as especially evident of the mutation into aperspectivity, but nor does he deny it. In what follows, I will draw upon Romantic eteology as it evolved through the 19th and into the 20th century. I will begin by briefly unpacking the founding principle of Romantic thought: *organism*. I will then end by pointing to Gebser and Rilke’s Christopoietic vision as perhaps the most effective means of spiritual transformation.

¹¹ p. 309, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985)

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ quoted on p. 307, *ibid.*

Organic Linguistics

Cassirer marks the linguistic philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder, an early Romantic and major influence on the development of Goethe, as

“the transition from the older rationalistic concept of ‘reflective form,’ which dominated the philosophy of the Enlightenment, to the Romantic concept of ‘organic form.’”¹⁴

Language, for the Romantics, *is* an organism. This is not a metaphor and is to be understood quite literally, as for Herder, “language is never *made*, but *grows* in a necessary process from within.”¹⁵ *Organism* is here to be understood not as a specific kind of phenomenon or singular fact of nature, but rather as a “universal speculative principle,” a “*medius terminus*” integrating the mental-rational of such seeming opposites as *temporal process* and *eternal idea*, and “the unconscious growth of nature” and “the conscious creation of spirit.”¹⁶ In Kant’s last critique, the dualism between nature and freedom running throughout his system is similarly resolved with the concept of organism.¹⁷ Unlike merely mechanical nature, which Kant argued could be understood according to efficient causes alone, living nature displays a form of organization that remains inscrutable without applying formal and final causation. A living organism is an incarnating idea working to maintain the rule of the whole over the parts. Kant, of course, was in the end unable to overcome the dualism implicit in his system, since he applied organism as a *regulative* principle of human judgment, unwilling to assert it as *constitutive* of nature itself. He

¹⁴ p. 153, *An Essay on Man* (1944)

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ p. 154, *ibid.*

¹⁷ See *The Critique of Judgment* (1790)

felt this would require *genius* of a scientific sort, something he believed was only achievable by artists. An artist intuitively *creates* her object, while a scientist must empirically and deductively *discover* his. The reflective mind of the scientist, according to Kant, is cut off from the creative workings of the natural world and so can only uncover them piecemeal as dead mechanisms. Schelling followed the spirit, if not the letter, of Kant by arguing that the symbolically sensitive scientist could know organism to be constitutive of nature. According to Schelling, it was the creative imagination which, long ago, invented the symbolism

“that we need only interpret in order to discover that the less merely reflective thought we give nature, the more comprehensibly it speaks to us.”¹⁸

The scientist, like the artist, can imaginatively participate in the creative processes at the root of organic nature, there uncovering, in a flash of insight, the holistic patterns that, afterward, can be conceptually analyzed into mathematical laws. Schelling overcomes Kant’s dualism by integrating mind and nature *systatically* as *organism*. “Here for the first time,” writes Schelling,

“there emerged from [the symbolic imagination’s] sacred obscurity that ideal being in which the mind supposes concept and deed, design and execution, to be one...So long as I myself am *identical* with Nature, I understand what a living nature is as well as I understand my own life...As soon, however, as I separate myself, and with me everything ideal from nature, nothing remains to me but a dead object, and I cease to comprehend how a *life outside* me can be possible.”¹⁹

Schelling’s integration of concept/deed and design/execution is another way of expressing Gebser’s warning to avoid collapsing the integrated process/effect of systasis into something

¹⁸ p. 35, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1988)

¹⁹ p. 36, *ibid.*

merely effected, “for if we do we reduce it to a causal system.”²⁰ Further, Schelling’s *eteology* of organism, and his participatory approach to knowledge, are clear exemplifications of what Gebser refers to as synairetic thought-perception. Synairesis is a mode of thought-perception that integrates and makes systatically present the respective modes of each structure of consciousness: mental system, mythic symbol, and magic symbiosis all become transparent to one another.

These examples should make it clear that the integral structure of consciousness, along with its characteristic form of systatic statement, was attempting to break through in the Romantic’s philosophy, or *eteology*, of organism. Organism heals the conceptual dualism responsible for the fragmentation hampering the deficient mental structure of consciousness. Through the symbolism of a properly living--that is, *poetic*, rather than *prosaic*--language, origin can be brought to consciousness.

Symbolic Transcendence

Cassirer, belying the rationalistic bias attributed him by Gebser, argues that “we cannot conceive of any real thing except under the conditions of space and time.”²¹ If this were true, an awareness of origin would be impossible, as would true creativity, which for Gebser “is not bound to space and time.”²² From Cassirer’s mental-rational perspective, experience can only be measured, and so understood, within the bounds of space and time. Perhaps the most difficult obstacle for Kantian rationalists like Cassirer is accepting the *arationality* of genuine creativity.

²⁰ p. 310, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985)

²¹ p. 42, *An Essay on Man* (1944)

²² p. 313, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985)

Creativity “reveals the limitations of understanding,” since its effects on the evolution of consciousness are largely “spontaneous, acausal, and discontinuous,” and cannot be grasped systematically.²³

Despite Gebser’s criticism of Cassirer, he nonetheless goes a long way toward developing the mode of thought-perception characteristic of the integral structure of consciousness, as I will attempt to show below.

Gebser notes that creativity has a largely psychic emphasis, and warns that this makes all statements about it partial.²⁴ Because of its basis in the psyche, exploring the mythic consciousness of the symbolic imagination is perhaps the best angle of approach available to us if we hope to better integrate its energies.

Symbolism is at the very center of Cassirer’s philosophy of culture. He argues that it is precisely symbolic imagination and intelligence that distinguish the human being from the rest of the animal kingdom.

“The principle of symbolism, with its universality, validity, and general applicability, is the magic word, the Open Sesame! giving access to the specifically human world, to the world of human culture.”²⁵

In a way at least approaching the Romantic’s expansive application of organism beyond particular cases to encompass the whole of the universe, Cassirer employs symbolism to account for the entirety of the cultural world. He again draws upon Herder to claim that even the reflective mode of thinking characteristic of the mental-rational structure of consciousness is

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ p. 33, *An Essay on Man* (1944)

entirely dependent upon its symbolic roots.²⁶ To the extent that Cassirer is open to the Romantic's synaeresis of language as a living organism (thereby overcoming the dualisms of deficient mentality) his thinking is on the way to aperspectivity.

"The true concept of reality," he writes,

"cannot be squeezed into the form of mere abstract being; it opens out into the diversity of the forms of spiritual life...In this sense, each new 'symbolic form'...constitutes, as Goethe said, a revelation sent outward from within, a 'synthesis of world and spirit,' which truly assures us that the two are originally one."²⁷

Cassirer's use of the term "synthesis" is a red flag for Gebserians, but his firm grasp of the original integrality of spirit and world suggests that, though he may have lacked the systatic terminology to express it, he did not lack an intuition of its meaning. In a discussion surrounding the Kantian dualism between mind and nature, Cassirer goes on to offer a startlingly integral formulation of the evolution of consciousness. I quote him at length due to the importance of this statement:

"From the standpoint of [Kant's] antithesis it would seem to follow that the richer the *symbolic content* of [a] cultural form becomes, the more its *essential content* must diminish. All the many images do not designate, but cloak and conceal the imageless One, which stands behind them and towards which they strive in vain. Only the negation of all finite figuration, only a return to the 'pure nothingness' of the mystics can lead us back to the true primal source of being. Seen in a different

²⁶ p. 39-41, *ibid.*

²⁷ p. 111, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol. I: Language* (1955)

light, this antithesis takes the form of a constant tension between ‘culture’ and ‘life.’ For it is the necessary destiny of culture that everything which it creates in its constant process of configuration and education removes us more and more from the originality of life. The more richly and energetically the human spirit engages in its formative activity, the farther this very activity seems to remove it from the primal source of its own being.”²⁸

In the early pages of *The Ever-Present Origin*, Gebser repeatedly reminds his readers that the evolution of consciousness is not a continuous progression: “Progress is..a progression away, a distancing and withdrawal from something, namely, origin.”²⁹ Clearly, Cassirer’s understanding of the evolution of symbolic forms is congruent with Gebser’s. However, by suggesting that only a “return” to the “pure nothingness” of the mystics allow us to break through veil of culture, Cassirer remains tied to the absolutist tendencies of the deficient mental structure of consciousness. Instead of avoiding regression into mysticism by overdetermining philosophy through eteology, thereby allowing origin to break through into consciousness, Cassirer restricts himself to the role of the rationalistic philosopher, forgoing the spiritual possibility because forgetting the physical actuality of his own “being-in-truth”/“a-waring/”verition” “of” origin.³⁰ The longing of his soul to find perfection in the concretion of “his” spirit is tragically blocked, as he pretends to “[find] fulfillment only in the sharpness of the concept and in the clarity of ‘discursive’ thought.”³¹

²⁸ p. 113, *ibid.*

²⁹ p. 41, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985)

³⁰ See p. 352-356, *ibid.*

³¹ p. 113, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol. 1: Language* (1955)

Cassirer's thought ultimately remains anthropocentric because it rests upon an unbridgeable ontological chasm between nature and culture. Such a chasm can, in the end, only produce a disintegrated cosmology and an alienating politics. His allegiance to scientific naturalism as the "clearest" and so most "useful" symbolic form prevents Cassirer not only from understanding, but from ethically "becoming-with" the organism/s of the world. "Becoming-with" is a term invented by contemporary Whiteheadian Donna Haraway to signal the need for a strong dose of "animal phenomenology" to correct for the anthropocentrism of deficient mental techno-science. Her work is a call to an intensified consciousness of the "lively knottings that tie together the world."³² Though Cassirer remained consistently fascinated by an intuition of organism as *the symbol of symbols*, he was met and blocked by the guardians of the physical sphere, namely space and time. He could not grasp and turn the magic key that poetically opens humanity to the presence of origin and the possibility of a truly integral civilization.

Cassirer's understanding of symbolism leads him to posit an external "nature" as the material "given" to culture for spiritualization. His discussion of alchemy in the last chapter of *An Essay on Man* displays a lack of acquaintance with the transmutational modes of consciousness instigating the living words of the Romantic symphilosophers/sympoets.³³

Cassirer admires the calculative power of mental-rational science as an advance over the "half-mythical language..full of obscure and ill-defined terms" he says makes up the alchemical-magical (and, we might add, astrological) corpus.³⁴ Gebser warns about the eventual

³² p.vii, *When Species Meet* (2007)

³³ For example, Friedrich Schlegel, who sought "a whole new epoch of science and art" based in the alchemy of creative communion with others of similar nature. His historical scholarship "served as [a] newly fashioned key to unlock the secrets of man and nature." -p. 20, *The Romantic Conception of Life* by Robert J. Richards

³⁴ p. 215, *An Essay on Man* (1944)

cosmopolitical cost of the quantifying mode of knowledge production, pointing to the distressing unconscious power of the deficient concepts of mass and measure over our conscious lives.³⁵ The mytho-magical language of pre-Enlightenment consciousness is rejected by Cassirer in favor of the rationality and instrumental value of numerical systems. He writes of the gradual mathematization of chemistry that, by the time of the periodic table of elements, had “learned to speak a quantitative language.” The qualitative phenomenology of each element was thought to be entirely deducible from a knowledge of its atomic number.³⁶ The work of Ilya Prigogine on the irreversibility of chemical organization has since made the spontaneous, non-deducible qualitative character of elemental processes more than apparent.³⁷ Like alchemy, Prigogine’s is a chemistry sensitive to the creativity of time, while Cassirer’s 19th century conception is frozen in the spatial fixities of the deficient mental structure of consciousness.

Unlike Cassirer, Gebser recognizes the extreme danger of psychic atomization resulting from an obsession with quantity by drawing our attention again to the poetic statements of Novalis:

“When number and numeral cease to be
a power o’er the creaturely...
where light and shade conjoin once more
to the true clarity of lore...
then can one cryptic word commence
to drive the topsy-turvy hence.”³⁸

³⁵ See p. 129-143, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985)

³⁶ p. 216, *An Essay on Man* (1944)

³⁷ See *The End of Certainty* (1997)

³⁸ quoted on p. 306, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985)

The spiritual realization of the symbolism of organism (cryptically alluding to both the life and death-poles of the soul³⁹) allows for participation in the becoming of the whole cosmos, in both its spatio-temporal and time-free aspects, beginning with the local planetary ecology of which we are a living member. In order to make transparent Cassirer's categorically-bound philosophy, where the world is manufactured by the concepts and systems of our cultural understanding, we must become conscious of the congruence between cosmogenesis and anthropoiesis. The new obligation of poetry is to raise the human soul above all 9 Muses⁴⁰ by transfiguring their unconscious cosmogenic energies into consciousness of the spiritual history of the world. "Poetry as history is the account of events...effected by creativity,"⁴¹ creativity as the common origin of the structure of both psyche and cosmos. Integral consciousness is imaginatively aware of the planetary bodies as the acategorical organs of the world-soul governing the life of the whole. This cosmic psyche is *clothed as the sky witnessed from earth*, and as such is intimately interwoven with the collective histories and personal stories of humanity. It is not only culture that is mutating with the integral constellation of consciousness, in other words, but the cosmos, as well:

"[The earth] is a star among stars, just as humans are only humans among other human beings. On its great journey across the millennia it hastens through the changing landscapes of 'heaven,' transforming its own countenance and man's."⁴²

³⁹ See Gebser's discussion of the polarity of the poetic soul, given life by the Muses and death by the angels on p. 322 of *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985). This will be discussed more below in connection with Rilke's poetry.

⁴⁰ p. 318, *ibid.*

⁴¹ p. 320, *ibid.*

⁴² p. 541, *ibid.*

In the mythopoetic language of archetypal cosmology,⁴³ Cassirer's individual soul, though it has grasped the truth, beauty, and goodness of Mercury, Venus, and the Sun, has yet to integrate and so make transparent the psychic symbolism of the other planets, most significantly Jupiter (space) and Saturn (clock-time). Integral consciousness bursts the limits of space and time through the transformative power of the creative imagination, ruled by the trans-egoic planets Pluto, Uranus, and Neptune, respectively.

The transformative, orgiastic power of Pluto is anxiety-producing for the time- and space-bound ego of mental-rational consciousness, as yet uninitiated into death by the 7 planetary gates written of by Dante.⁴⁴ Pluto is the Dionysian "original chaos of human nature"⁴⁵ that Cassirer sought to restrain by the ordering influence of Apollo.⁴⁶ Order is not to be give up in favor of chaos, nor intuition in favor of instinct, but to the extent that the psyche remains anxiously bound to the measure and mass of calculative thinking, it fails to pass through the death-rebirth mystery initiated by Pluto and so remains deficient in mentality. All organisms are born and die. The mental-rational human organism is conscious of its own mortality, but not yet conscious of its connection to origin. The anxiety ruling over the ever day life of contemporary humanity is a symptom of the ego's unwillingness to transform.

"Anxiety is always the first sign that a mutation is coming to the end of its expressive and effective possibilities, causing new powers to accumulate which, because they are thwarted, create a 'narrows' or constriction. At the culmination

⁴³ For an example of what poetic philosophy becomes when art, science, and myth are successfully integrated, see *Cosmos and Psyche* by Richard Tarnas. Gebser seems to hint at the need for a renewed astrological orientation on p. 135 of *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985).

⁴⁴ p. 320, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Friedrich Schlegel, quoted on p. 161 of *An Essay on Man* (1944)

⁴⁶ p. 163, *ibid.*

point of anxiety these powers liberate themselves, and this liberation is synonymous with a new mutation. In this sense, anxiety is the great birth-giver.”⁴⁷

In another work of magisterial scope, *Religion in Human Evolution*, Robert N. Bellah sums up our present predicament by comparing the secular “world of daily life...based on a fundamental anxiety...arising from the knowledge and fear of death”⁴⁸ to the world of “religious knowing” generated by “the feeling of an infinite Whole.”⁴⁹ The former is rooted in “standard time and standard space,” while the later is made efficacious by “the capacity for symbolic transcendence,” for going beyond the “dreadful immanence” and “mechanical necessity” of ordinary space and time.⁵⁰ Bellah, like Cassirer, recognizes the centrality of symbolism, but in recognizing the capacity for the symbolic imagination to transcend the finitude of measurable space-time to participate with spirit in the cosmogenesis, Bellah spiritualizes and makes conscious what for Cassirer remains merely the psycho-cultural projection of the collective unconscious.

The Angel of Death and the Coming of Christ

The debilitating anxiety of the mental-rational ego in the face of death prevents it from becoming aware of the ever-presence of origin, effective in both the life- and death-poles of the soul. Catherine Keller, another contemporary Whiteheadian, evinces the psychic demand of the integral structure of consciousness by comparing the finite ego’s relationship to the universe with

⁴⁷ p. 134, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985)

⁴⁸ p. 2, *Religion in Human Evolution* (2011)

⁴⁹ p. 6, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ p. 9, *ibid.*

the book of Job. Job, the archetypal human of the post-fall phase of creation, is called by YHWH to intensify the symbolic “horizon of what our little body-brains can know”:

“The limits of our knowing, like the limits of our lives, trap us within an often tragic finality. Yet here shadows of ignorance begin to suggest the bottomless mystery not only of death but of life.”⁵¹

Keller attempts to draw our attention both to the mortal limits of rational knowledge and the immortal reaches of aperspectival faith. She suggests that YHWH “is challenging Job’s readiness to stir the destructive forces of chaos”⁵² in service of the ongoing transformation from a suffering organism into a living symbol of origin, from flesh into Word. Job’s is the story of the initial emergence of the unconscious spirit buried in the primal depths of the universe into concrete and personal presence. Indeed, says Keller,

“Job already whirls toward an ecological theology of the Whiteheadian sort, in which human becoming looks cramped and cancerous--unless we collude more wisely with the elements, the plants, the beasts and each other.”

In learning to “become-with” the threads of life the bind the world into a whole, Job redeems his fallen state.

“Where were you,” asks YHWH of Job,

“before I laid the foundation of the world...when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? [Did you] enclose the sea with doors when, bursting forth, water went out from the womb; When I made a cloud its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and placed boundaries on it and

⁵¹ p. 131, *Face of the Deep: a theology of becoming* (2003)

⁵² p. 134, *ibid.*

set a bolt and doors, and I said, 'Thus far you shall come, but no further; and here shall your proud waves stop.'?"⁵³

Gebser points to the symbol of Christ as the first answer to YHWH's call, representing immunity to resubmergence in the tumultuous and anxiety-ridden animality of the depths of the soul.⁵⁴ In Christ, the Creator becomes conscious of the life of its own creation, the poet aware of his craft. YHWH enters into space and time, is crucified as Jesus, and reborn as the living symbol and original organism of creation.

Jesus said: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life."⁵⁵

Gebser marks water as the symbol of the life-pole of the soul, while the "siren-like angels" of Rilke's poetry are its death-pole.⁵⁶ Christ integrates the creativity of the former with the "perpetual plenitude" of the later, allowing the poet to both drink the wisdom of the past and "ware" the wisdom of the present.⁵⁷ Rilke writes of Christ, who for the ego appears indistinguishable from the siren-like angel "deep inside the doors of the dead," that "he obeys, even as he oversteps the bounds" of space and time.⁵⁸

I quote Rilke's poem *Sonnets to Orpheus* at length, for these words mark a crucial event in the dateless history of spirit's creativity:

⁵³ *Job* 38:4-8

⁵⁴ p. 89, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985)

⁵⁵ *Revelation* 21:6

⁵⁶ p. 320, *The Ever-Present Origin* (1985)

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ verse 5, series 1, *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1955)

“To praise, that’s it! Called to praise, he came like ore out of the silence of stone. Oh, his heart’s a perishable press of a wine that’s eternal for men...Only one who’s also raised the lyre among shades may return unending praise with warning...Look at the sky...Even the linking of stars is a lie. But for a while now let’s be happy to believe the symbol. That’s enough...Hail to the spirit who can link us: because we live in symbols, really. And with tiny steps the clocks walk beside our primal day...Dare to say what you call apple. This sweetness that condenses first so in the taste that’s so tenderly intense it may become awake, transparent, double meaning, clear, bright, earthly, ours--O knowledge, feeling, joy--immense!...Deep down, the oldest tangled root of all that’s grown, the secret source they’ve never seen...Branch pushing branch, not one of them free...One! oh, climb higher...higher...Yet they still break. But this top one finally bends into a lyre...Do you hear the New, Master, droning and throbbing? Its prophesying promoters are advancing. No hearing’s truly keen in all this noise; still, now each machine part wills its praise. See, the Machine: how it spins and wreaks revenge, deforms and demeans us. Since its power comes from us, let it do its work and serve, serene...Even if the world changes as fast as the shapes of clouds, all perfected things at last fall back to the very old. Over what’s passing and changing, freer and wider, your overture is lasting, god with the lyre. Pain’s beyond our grasp, love hasn’t been learned, and whatever eliminates us in death is still secret. Only the Song above the land blesses and celebrates...But you O divine one, resounder to the end, when the swarm of unrequited maenads fell

upon you, o beautiful one, you over sung their cries with order, your edifying song rose from the destroyers. No one was present who could crush your head and lyre, no matter how they struggled and wrested. And all the sharp stones they threw at your heart, on touching you, became tender and gifted with hearing. Finally they tore you, impelled by vengeance, while your sound still lingered in rock and lions, in trees and birds. You still sing there now. O you lost god, you endless trace! Only because in the end hate divided you are we now nature's mouth and listeners...Breath, you invisible poem! Steady sheer exchange between the cosmos and our being. Counterpoise in which I rhythmically become."⁵⁹

Conclusion

While mental philosophy demands *explanation* (literally, *spatialization*, or *laying out on a plain* so as to *expose*), poetic statement integrates the dimensionality of space and time by making the whole transparently present. Poetry awakens us to origin without the need of argumentation or systematic conception. It "[steadies the] sheer exchange between the cosmos and our being," as Rilke says. In such verse, the ego-fixed soul find's its way through the mystery of death and is born again into the eternal life, now not of the waters, but of the spirit. Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ verses 7-26, series 1 and verse 1, series 2, *ibid*.

⁶⁰ See *John* 3:6