

# FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN

## Communism of Spirits

TRANSLATED BY H. BOLIN

EUGENE AND LOTHAR

THEOBALD AND OSCAR

### *Disposition*

Sundown. Chapel. Vast, rich land. River. Forests. The friends. The chapel alone still illuminated. The conversation comes to the middle ages. The monastic orders according to their ideal meaning. Their influence on religion and at the same time on science. These two schools have diverged, the orders fallen, but wouldn't similar institutions be desirable? We start from the exact opposite principle, from the generality of unbelief, in order to prove their necessity for our time. This unbelief is correlated with the scientific critique of our times, which accelerates ahead of positive speculation; lamentation is fruitless, the task is to help. Science must either destroy Christianity or become one with it; since science can only be one, the task is to not let science become dependent on external circumstances and by trusting in that unity that everyone who knows and loves humanity wishes for and intimates, to create for it a magnificent, dignified, autonomous existence. Seminars and academies of our time. University. The new academy.

A beautiful evening draws to its end. The parting light seemed to gather all its forces together and cast its last golden rays over a chapel that rose upon the peak of a hill overgrown with wine and meadows alluring in their simplicity. The light's shimmer no longer struck the valley at the foot of the hill and only the roar of its surge testified to the Neckar nearby, which, to greet the coming night raised its murmuring voice the more the day's melody trailed off. The herds had all headed home and only every once in a

while did a shy deer slip from out of the forest forth in search of sustenance under the open sky. The mountains were still illuminated. A spirit of peace and melancholy effused it all. "Lothar," began one of the two youths who had observed the scene for some time from the steps of the chapel and had now shifted somewhat from their spot to bid the last ray that struck the roof of the church farewell, "Lothar! Does a secret ache not grip you too when the sky's eye is torn from nature and the earth's vastness stands there like a riddle whose solution lacks words, see, now the light has retreated and the proud mountains cloak themselves, this motionlessness induces anxiety and the remembrance of past beauty poisons; it has happened to me a hundred times as I had to turn back from the free ether of antiquity into the night of the present and found no salvation other than in the paralyzed surrender that is the death of the soul; it is a tormenting feeling, the remembrance of splendors vanished, you stand like a criminal before history, and the deeper you have lived through it the more fiercely you are shaken by awakening from this dream, you see a rift between here and there, and I at least, must declare so much that was once great and beautiful lost, forever lost. Look at this chapel, what kind of colossal, powerful spirit created it, with what force did he drive the world's expanse, he crowned the quiet hills with tranquil sanctity, in the flat of this valley he placed his monastery, in the thick of the city his majestic cathedral, and thousands of people were subordinate to him and those poor and abandoned by the earth's caress grazed about in habits as his apostles and acted—but I don't have to tell you, you know world history; and where is it all? You understand, I'm not asking about what that epoch has handed down to us, I'm not asking about dead matter but rather, if you will, about the form in which it happened, about that energy and consequence that seemed to lose itself in the infinite yet in what was most remote nonetheless corresponded with the middle point, which retains the sound of the original melody in every variation; in this sense form is the only thing that can present us with a point of comparison for our situation, since the material is always something given; form however is the element of the human spirit in which freedom acts as law and reason becomes contemporary; now compare that age with ours, where will you

find a community? Where is the bridge that brought so much splendor from that land to us? Where is that pious, powerful spirit that raised the churches, that grounded orders, all as if from one cast? that from a middle point which raised itself above the world of its time forced everything under the sway of its intelligence and power of faith?-----

## DISPOSITION

With us, everything is concentrated on the spiritual, we became poor so that we could become rich.

Old world.

1) Monarchy. Greece, later Rome

Middle ages.

2) Constitutional monarchy

New era.

3) Republic.

ad 2) Different nations – One church with one pope.

ad 3) General priesthood, prelude to Protestantism.