



Love In Karoline Von Günderrode (1780–1806)

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Karoline von Günderrode was born in 1780 in Karlsruhe and died in 1806 in Winkel am Rhein. Education was prized by her family, who employed a household tutor, and, after Günderrode moved to the Kronstett-Hynspergische Damenstift in Frankfurt at the age of 17, she continued to educate herself in philosophy, Greek and Latin.

Günderrode's literary and philosophical writings delineate a dynamist metaphysics in which love is the force of attraction between "elements" (*Elemente*) that make up the universe. Physical entities, including living beings, are constructed from groupings of these elements, which separate when the entities are destroyed (or die) and subsequently reconverge in different constellations as new beings. Relationships between the elements are governed by forces of attraction, which human beings experience as love or feelings of affinity or harmonisation with others.

For Günderrode, "love" describes the connection not only between individuals, but also between individuals and the cosmos. On Günderrode's account, the succession of individual entities that make up the world are manifestations of a unitary "idea" or "spirit" as it recreates itself in various forms until it achieves perfect identity between form and essence. Thus Günderrode writes that "love, benevolence, compassion is the longing of the particular to enjoy itself in the All, i.e., to become aware of the All in the particular, and, renouncing personhood, to surrender itself to the All" ("Idea of the Earth"). Love between individuals, like friendship, compassion, and other feelings of connection to others, thus manifests the general striving of the individual entities of the world to reach a unified state.

Günderrode's metaphysics are influenced by Schelling and her account of love corresponds in some respects to Fichtean, Early German Romantic, Goethean and Christian models. In addition, her account reflects ideas found in Empedocles. Like for Empedocles, in Günderrode's universe love is not the only force operating on the "elements": she also describes the elements as in "struggle," "conflict" or "strife" (*Kampf, Zwist, Streit*). For Günderrode, therefore, love is one of two motors (with "strife") that

drive the creation of the cosmos and the generation and destruction of all beings within it.

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