



The Quest of the Absolute: Birth and Decline of European Romanticism

Louis Dupre

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This eagerly awaited study brings to completion Louis Dupré's planned trilogy on European culture during the modern epoch. Demonstrating remarkable erudition and sweeping breadth, *The Quest of the Absolute* analyzes Romanticism as a unique cultural phenomenon and a spiritual revolution. Dupré philosophically reflects on its attempts to recapture the past and transform the present in a movement that is partly a return to premodern culture and partly a violent protest against it.

Following an introduction on the historical origins of the Romantic Movement, Dupré examines the principal Romantic poets of England (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats), Germany (Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Hölderlin), and France (Lamartine, de Vigny, Hugo), all of whom, from different perspectives, pursued an absolute ideal. In the chapters of the second part, he concentrates on the critical principles of Romantic aesthetics, the Romantic image of the person as reflected in the novel, and Romantic ethical and political theories. In the chapters of the third, more speculative, part, he investigates the comprehensive syntheses of romantic thought in history, philosophy, and theology.

The Quest of the Absolute is an important work both as the culmination of Dupré's ongoing project and as a classic in its own right. The book will meet the expectations of the specialist as well as appeal to more general readers with philosophical, cultural, and religious interests.

"*The Quest of the Absolute* is the third volume in Louis Dupré's trilogy dealing with the origins and development of modernity and the major cultural currents defining its history. It follows *Passage to Modernity* (1993) and *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture* (2004). This third volume deals with the Romantic movement. Dupré's impressive account is concerned to restore something of the full dimensionalities to Romanticism as a whole, to acknowledge something of the immense intellectual, political, and spiritual ambitions at work in it, without reneging on a reflective critical relation to it." —**William Desmond, author of *The Intimate Strangeness of Being: Metaphysics after Dialect***

"Louis Dupré's fascinating portrayal of the Romantic soul urges us to look afresh at this crucial 'third wave' of modernity. His thorough insight, astonishing erudition, mild judgment, and unparalleled perspicacity bring to life the works and ideas of many whimsical personalities. He convincingly demonstrates that their restless search for existential depth and authenticity reveals layers of truth and meaning that can function as a mirror for our times." —**Joris Geldhof, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium**

"In this extraordinarily comprehensive and penetrating study, the capstone to a great scholarly career, Louis Dupré undertakes nothing less than a grand synthesis of Romantic thought; yet the book is beautifully written and a joy to read. Discussions of English, French, and German poetry and fiction are seamlessly linked to systematic analyses of Romantic aesthetics, psychology, and ethics, as well as such other aspects of Romantic thought as the new religious and historical conceptions that emerge in the period. *The Quest of the Absolute* is a brilliant, indeed indispensable, book, one that demonstrates, more clearly than any previous study, why Romanticism is still relevant to the struggles that confront us in the twenty-first century." —**Henry Weinfield, University of Notre Dame**

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