

GOETHE

—

RUNES

ROERICH
MUSEUM
PRESS

GOETHE



"NEW ERA LIBRARY"



GOETHE

BOOK II

SERIES THREE—"HEROICA SERIES"
NEW ERA LIBRARY

*"The evolution of the New Era rests on
the cornerstone of Knowledge and Beauty."*
—ROERICH.



THE ARCHIVE OF
NICHOLAS
ROERICH
MUSEUM

NEW ERA LIBRARY

SERIES

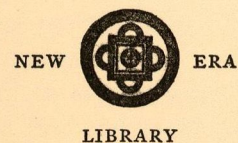
- I. LIGHTS OF AMERICA
- II. LIGHTS OF ASIA
- III. HEROICA SERIES
- IV. URUSVATI SERIES
- V. COLLECTORS SERIES
- VI. ROERICH MUSEUM SERIES
- VII. NATURAL HISTORY SERIES
- VIII. FOLK LORE SERIES
- IX. SAYINGS OF ETERNITY
- X. SONGS AND SAGAS.

G O E T H E

A S Y M P O S I U M

EDITED BY DAGOBERT D. RUNES

INTRODUCTION BY NICHOLAS ROERICH



ROERICH MUSEUM PRESS

NEW YORK

MCMXXXII

COPYRIGHT, 1932
ROERICH MUSEUM PRESS, NEW YORK

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

J. J. LITTLE & IVES COMPANY, NEW YORK

FOREWORD

A century has elapsed since the death of Goethe. Throughout the world scholars and laymen are preparing to render honor to his memory. Today, perhaps more than at any other time, we may aptly partake of the breadth of his art and wisdom.

It is with a realization of Goethe's importance to contemporary life that this symposium has been assembled. Men from all the areas of the earth, men encompassing various fields of knowledge, have joined in the preparation of this volume.

The editor makes no claim to completeness; he does not venture to suppose that even one phase of Goethe's complex life and activities has been thoroughly covered. It is indeed a question whether any single volume could adequately penetrate the vastness of Goethe's contributions to humanity or even the manifold complexities of the poet's life. Nevertheless the student may find here material to give him thought, and perhaps also a viewpoint with which he was previously unacquainted.

The editor wishes to acknowledge his appreciation of the courteous cooperation and assistance of the writers and publishers who have permitted the use of titles, data, and material originally copyrighted by them—among these are especially The Poetry Society of London, publisher of "The Poetry Review"; G. P. Putnam's Sons, publishers of

"Goethe and the Twentieth Century," by John G. Robertson; Harvard University, publishers of "Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature" and "Three Philosophical Poets," by George Santayana; Alfred Knopf, publisher of "Three Essays," by Thomas Mann; Harper & Brothers, publishers of "Goethe and Beethoven," by Romain Rolland. The editor wishes further to express his indebtedness to Miss Frances R. Grant, Director of the Roerich Museum Press, and to Mr. Paul Haines of New York University for their aid in the making of this symposium.

D. D. R.

New York: March, 1932

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.....By <i>Nicholas Roerich</i>	xi
I GOETHE—1832-1932.....By <i>William Ellery Leonard</i>	1
II GOETHE THE MUSICIAN.....By <i>Romain Rolland</i>	3
III GOETHE'S PERENNIAL MESSAGE..By <i>Dagobert D. Runes</i>	18
IV GOETHE'S PAGANISM IN ART AND RELIGION By <i>Thomas Mann</i>	23
V GOETHE—A WORLD FIGURE..By <i>Frederick B. Robinson</i>	27
VI GREAT MOMENTS IN GOETHE'S LIFE By <i>Allen W. Porterfield</i>	38
VII GOETHE AND FAUST.....By <i>George Santayana</i>	61
VIII THE POET GOETHE.....By <i>Wallace B. Nichols</i>	65
IX GOETHE'S VIEWS ON ART.....By <i>H. A. Korff</i>	76
X GOETHE AND THE FAR EAST.....By <i>Erich Jenisch</i>	90
XI GOETHE AS SCIENTIST AND CRITIC..By <i>John G. Robertson</i>	105
XII GOETHE AND CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT By <i>Harry Slochower</i>	115

GOETHE

INTRODUCTION

By NICHOLAS ROERICH

*Wär nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,
Die Sonne könnt' es nie erblicken.*

*Alles könne man verlieren
Wenn man bleibe was man ist.**

THIS LIKENESS to the sun, this might of the personality—these banners of the significance of Goethe were expressed by himself. Again in time, perturbed humanity is reminded of the invincibly beautiful image, in which the entire substance of his time is expressed. No adjectives are needed for the expression, “time of Goethe” or rather the “epoch of Goethe.” The name of Goethe became an honorary coat-of-arms, not only for its creativeness, wholeness of thought, depths of cognizance, courage of consciousness, nobility of feeling—this name verily encircled in itself an entire epoch full of the most powerful expressions of the spirit. The style of Goethe is not only the style of a writer, not only the style of a powerful Empire, but the style of an epoch. Not waves of fashion, nor revaluations, nor new achievements can affect the

** Never would the eye behold the sun
Were it not engendered in light.*

*To him who himself remains,
All may be lost.*

giants, creators, interpreters of an epoch such as Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, Cervantes, Goethe. . . . It is impossible to say that they stand as lonely peaks, for in them is fused the spirit of their times! They have become super-personalities, because they personified the most noble achievements of the epoch. Count A. Tolstoy, exultingly addressing the artists and, remembering the images of Homer, Phidias, Beethoven, Goethe, writes:

“No, not Goethe this, who fashioned the great Faust
In ancient Germanic attire
But in its truth, great and universal,
It seems the eternal image, word for word.
Or Beethoven when he created his funeral march—
Did he fashion the succession of chords which tear one’s
soul?
No, these sounds cried out always in the limitless space.
Being deaf to earth, he hearkened for these unearthly cries.
Be ye blind as Homer and deaf as Beethoven.
But strain more zealously thy spiritual ear and spiritual
eye
And as if upon the flame of a secret writing faint lines
emerge suddenly
Thus will the pictures suddenly emerge before thee
And more vivid will become the colors and more perceptible the paints.
The harmonious correlation of words will interweave in
clear meaning.
And ye, at this moment, behold, hearkening, holding thy
breath
And afterwards, creating—recall the fleeting vision!”

In such words, the writer desired to show the entire unearthly and superhuman substance of the creativeness of Goethe. The great lines of many secret writings were revealed to the eye of Goethe. It has been said that Goethe belonged to secret philosophical societies. This is not important. Are there not a few members and dignitaries in all other societies? The flame of the spirit, the fire of the heart, the great Agni—not through reason, but through straight knowledge—acquainted Goethe with the secret places of the summits. The synthesis is never transmitted through societies. But it is significant to see how Goethe as a true Messenger did not deviate from life, but found a smile for all its flowers. Limitation is not befitting an all-embracing spirit.

With all justice one may call Goethe’s direction of thought spatial. In it he affirmed personality, but there was liberation from egoism. Agni Yoga! Such a correlation is even inconceivable for small consciousnesses, but it is a true test of the potentiality of the personality. Did Goethe know the teachings of the East? He probably did. For, romanticism does not exist without the East. It has not reached us as to how much Goethe studied the treasures of the East. He did not insist upon them, but it is clear that he knew them; perhaps the all-embracingness inherent in him opened easily also these significant gates.

They say Goethe is an Initiate! How, then, not an initiate, if in the flaming formula he could touch the most sacred stones without searing his hands?

How then not an initiate into the laws of the foundation, if undaunted he could cross all gorges, crowded with delayed and lost travelers? How then not an initiate, if

he walked his own path, not as a seeker, but as a carrier of the treasure of the far-off worlds?

To the seer of secrets, Hoffman, it is exactly *Geheimrat Archivarius* who is a spirit of fire.

Verily Goethe was a real *Geheimrat*—not a royal one but a panhuman one. He bore this title with the ease of a giant who smiles at the fragment of a cliff which falls upon his chest. This ease in bearing the unspilled chalice of life, startles us in the paths of the greatest personalities. What would cost many wrinkles, distortions, and sighs to some—is for the giant simply another inevitability which he encounters joyously in order to hasten further onwards. Goethe himself confesses: “So unrestrainable is my striving onward that I can scarcely permit myself to inhale, or to glance back.” In this powerful uplifting of the chalice, one remembers the legend of Christopher through the stream of life. The memory of Goethe should be celebrated in a manner especially sun-full.

As with many other standards which are not according to usual measurements, Goethe remains for some—a seemingly experienced statesman; for others—an incorrigible revolutionary; for some—a foundation; for others—a shaker of foundations. But the quality of commentaries and discussions on Goethe is itself astonishing. The entire variety of things ascribed to Goethe and demanded from Goethe provide the scope of his creativeness.

Certainly such a mind could not have been uniform.

Goethe culminated the time of Schiller, Herder, Burger, Winckelmann, Kant, Lessing. A great time! And Frankfort-am-Main is a good place! Leipzig, Strassburg, Wetzlar, Weimar—all are saturated with significant meetings. Lit-

erature, art, science, the law, state-craft, the entire complex of life, served only to intensify the consciousness of Goethe, not in the least burdening his powerful creative shoulders. There is time for everything and there is a smile for everything.

The years in Italy, his friendship with the similarly great spirit, Schiller, balancing and mutually complementing each other, forged the indissoluble unity. Finally, the eighty-year-old hand of Goethe inscribes the final lines of *Faust* as the synthesis of life. So Goethe himself considers, for to Eckermann, he expresses his understanding of the remainder of his life as a gift. And the next year, Goethe hastens into the far-off world.

A world spirit, *Weltgeist*, is Goethe. And of course world unity is one of his foundations. Creativeness and criticism manifest themselves in the creations of Goethe in an original combination: “To decide to live in all embracingness, in Bliss, in the Beautiful.”

Goetz influenced even Scott in his *Ivanhoe*; the *Corinthian Bride*, *The Earl King*, *God and the Bayadere*, *Tasso*, *Egmont*, *Iphigenie* have inspired the best minds for translations, transcriptions and musical settings.

And *Wilhelm Meister* is unforgettable as an image of culture and construction (*Bildung*), affording to many a vital lesson.

Free from didacticism and dry moralizing, Goethe gave the teachings of life through inspiring images of touching romanticism, fusing them in the symbol of *The Sorrows of Werther*.

Weltanschauung—Goethe’s contemplation of the world,

is irrepeatable because it is founded on his own unrepeatable rhythm of saturated, untiring action.

The influence of Goethe is not only profound in all German countries, but also in the Anglo-Saxon and Slavic world, as well as in America. *Nur rastlos betätigt sich der Mann*. Only in changing the activity of the nervous centers, as Voltaire, he did not know the meaning of rest. His *reine Menschlichkeit* was not foreign to immortality as also his *ewig Weibliches* always soared in the pure spheres of exultation through beauty. The Centenary of Goethe for each broadened consciousness must be verily the Festival of a solar holiday! Goethe was close to Apollo; he was close to the light of antiquity. His key is a major one. A beautiful presentation. A beautiful Edition, in a beautiful leather binding, which does not break at the first opening, with beautiful frontispieces and adornments. A dignified national festival where the noble *Meistersinger* may be crowned. Thus one envisages, contemplates, the anniversary of the glorious Goethe so near-to-all.

The Earl King and *Corinthian Bride* were the themes for my first sketches; and of course *Faust* has been given in our Children's Theater.

We remember our study table, the school edition of *Goetz* and *Werther*; we recollect all the benevolent and beautiful thoughts which were sprung from the ballads of Goethe. Never once has it been necessary to renounce one of them and never did one have to be ashamed of the name of Goethe. One enthusiastic student often wondered: Why Wolfgang? Why not Leo, when the creator of *Faust* had a lion's tread!

There is no dispute about Goethe. One can only rejoice over him with strengthened and finest reminiscence. To the friend of our spiritual accumulations it befits a solar holiday! One desires to accompany the celebration of Goethe with something solemn and hearty and harmonious. He is in the garden of life. There the Lilies of the Madonna have blossomed; there are gathered the hearkening ones. And from Solomon's beautifully wise antiquity, from the *Song of Songs* is fragrant this flower-garden of life:

"Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee. My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens and to gather lilies."

Himalayas,
Urusvati, 1931

GOETHE

GOETHE—1832-1932

By WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD

EARTH'S MILLIONS have for so many millenniums been busy with so many interests, besides devising a living and new ways for making a living—interests of science, of art, of religion, and of social organization—that any one man must be great indeed to command, a century after his death, the homage of the best minds of an age that differs from his own age as amazingly as the year 1932 differs from 1832. Such a man, such a living man, was—and is—Goethe. His glowing leadership in creating a new German literature, his wise services to the little state of which he was so long the dedicated prime minister, his concern for and his part in the advancement of knowledge of the many-sided physical universe, these and other contributions to the dignity and progress of life have long since lost their individual outlines, their individual dynamics, absorbed into the sweeping cultural movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Here he has merged his personality with the human race that he loved so well: and I think he would be content to have it so. But he abides, beyond all this, in his own right, in his own voice, in his own name, the richest, the most prophetic personality of modern times—the most complete vindication of his own announcement in the *Divan* of the

Höchstes Glück der Erdenkinder

Indeed, he lives for us as two personalities, strangely and beautifully merged: magnanimous, longing, spontaneous Youth; magnanimous, brooding, all-seeing, all-meditating Age. There is the premonition of the Old Goethe in the Boy, there is the reverberation of the Boy in the Old Goethe: never let them be torn asunder, to be viewed apart. We would lose thereby something too wonderful to be lost. The Boy brooded in the *Urfaust*, like a troubled sage; the Old Man sang like a careless, triumphant child on the twenty-fifth anniversary of a love-union already late, after so many lovely girlish faces had come and gone:

Ich ging im Walde. . . .

This marvelous personality is preserved to us in factual biographic and autobiographic documents; and a modern mind, analytically alert to the springs and achievements of human endeavor, and imaginatively responsive to the organic unity of the results, could feel its impact directly from the historical documents, even were all Goethe's creative words, as artist, long ago destroyed. But they are not destroyed. And they never can be. For were every printed book burned, and every printing press wrecked, thousands and thousands of men and women, not alone in Germany, but in England, France, Russia, America, Canada, Australia, all over the earth, could—and would—for the generations to follow, piece together in immortal manuscripts, from the most intimate and precious deeps of their own beings, the very words of a hundred lyrics, and every word of *Faust*, and so much beside . . . And among those thousands how proudly and how confidently I would offer myself.

GOETHE THE MUSICIAN

By ROMAIN ROLLAND

GOETHE'S ATTITUDE towards music has not hitherto received the attention which it deserves. The man of letters who is also a musician is a rarity. When men of this type are found, their taste in music is usually so amateurish that it has been supposed that Goethe was cut to the same inadequate measure. Even at his best, Goethe was not considered to be on a higher level than that of a gifted amateur. He was known to be distinguished, refined, and sensitive, but without any technical knowledge, a man who judged musical works according to the impressions which they made upon him; these impressions, at times vivid and penetrating, were largely instinctive, and were often affected by the prevailing fashion of the day. His failure to understand Beethoven was thus set down to an incompetence in an art which was altogether alien to him.

But when we take the trouble to follow Goethe's artistic life from beginning to end, we find that we must abandon this view. From first to last we are struck by the great part which music played in his life.

We know, of course, that he was above all a "visual,"

*Zum Sehen geboren,
Zum Schauen bestellt . . .*

(born to see, destined to observe . . .), and that to him the finest harmony was that which was conveyed through his sight. It was he who said so strikingly, "compared with the eye, the ear is a dumb sense." Nevertheless, there was no dumb sense in Goethe; every pore, as it were, was open to the beauty of the world, and we can almost say that in his case the ear was a second eye.

As I have already said, his ear was most sensitive. He could not tolerate din; street noises were a torture to him, he had an aversion to the barking of dogs; he avoided the blare of the romantic orchestra, and at the theatre the kettle-drum beats hurt him; he would leave his box in the middle of the performance. We must always bear in mind the extreme sensitiveness of his nerves, the delicate organisms which dominated his mind. His recognition of this heel of Achilles (for he knew all his weaknesses) was largely responsible for his isolation at Weimar, and his fear of large cities.

But do not let us make any mistake. It was noise which he hated; the fulness of rich, pure sound delighted him. He had a fine and powerful bass voice, and liked to hear it. Even at the age of seventy he astounded Mendelssohn by its "tremendous sonority." That voice, had he wished, could have been "heard above the din of ten thousand warriors," the young musician wrote to his sister Fanny. And indeed, when he directed rehearsals at the Weimar Theatre, his commands, thundering forth from his box, filled the whole theatre. When he recited he knew how to use all the registers of his voice.

He had developed this magnificent organ, not only by reading aloud and reciting, but also by singing. As a little

child he learnt by heart the tunes of children's songs even before he could understand the meaning of the words, as children mostly do. In Leipzig he sang sentimental duets with the Breitkopf sisters. Never, throughout his life, did he write a *Lied* without humming a melody to it. "Never read, alway sing" he wrote in a love poem to Lina, recommending that, in order to read his poems, she sit at the piano and play. Here we have a trait which distinguished him essentially from all our songless poets. Of music he said that it was the "true element from which all poetry is derived and into which all poetry flows," like a river into the sea.

Besides singing, he had learned in Frankfurt to play the piano, and in Strassburg he had studied the 'cello. We read that in 1795, at the age of forty-six, "he played the piano quite well." There is, however, reason to believe that after he settled in Weimar (towards the end of 1775) he neglected the piano, except on rare occasions when he used Wieland's instrument. No doubt he did not consider it advisable to be heard at a court of music-lovers in which his fair friend, Frau von Stein, played both the piano and the lute. His privileged position enabled him also to hear music whenever he wished, without having to play himself; he had but to send for the court musicians, who were under his orders.

It is well to remember, however, that music was to him not simply an amusement. It was either an intelligent interest for the mind, a means of soothing, calming, and restoring the spirit, or a source of direct inspiration to creative activity. Thus in 1779 he sent for the musicians "to soothe his soul and set free his spirit," while he was

writing *Iphigenie*. In 1815-16 he had recourse to music as a help to inspiration while he was writing *Epimenides*. In 1820 he wrote: "I can always work better after I have been listening to music."

There is no doubt that he composed, and that he even wrote in several parts. The following is a curious example:

During the summer of 1813—the year after he met Beethoven—while he was alone in Bohemia and in a depressed frame of mind, he meditated deeply on the immortal words of desperate hope—*In te Domine speravi et non confundar in aeternum*. He set them to music for voices in four parts. The following winter, reading his composition again, he asked Zelter to set the same words to music also in four parts. His obliging friend obeyed. And Goethe, after comparing the two versions, wrote to Zelter (February 23, 1814) that the comparison had thrown a light on his own musical personality; his composition reminded him of Jommelli's style. (That wasn't half bad!) He added: "How astonished and pleased we are when we find ourselves unexpectedly on such paths. We become suddenly aware of our own subconscious life."

But his conception of art was too high to permit the existence of schoolboy compositions; they were written in a language which remained foreign to him, no matter how skilfully he spoke it.

What had been his musical development? As a child, in Frankfurt, the Italian arias and the French light operas (*Sedaine* and *Favart*, *Monsigny* and *Grettry*).

In Leipzig, the German *Singspiele* (ballad operas) in which Johann Adam Hiller excelled. But the worthy Hiller, whom Goethe knew personally, was much more than

an amiable musician; he was one of the greatest musical instructors in Germany. He had founded a weekly musical journal and had organized excellent symphony and choral concerts (he called them "musical evenings") which later on became the famous *Gewandhaus* concerts.

During this first period, before Goethe was twenty, the sceptre of music was wielded by Hasse, the great master of pure melody whom even Mozart hardly surpassed. But the influence of Gluck was already becoming apparent. . . . It goes almost without saying that Gluck represented for Goethe one of the loftiest peaks in the art of music, and it was not altogether his fault if the two did not work together. In 1774, when Goethe's period of *Lieder* was in full blossom, after the delightful spring of Strassburg, he was trying to find a composer who could work hand in hand with him. He asked one of his friends to mention him to Gluck, and she sent some of young Goethe's poems to the old composer. Gluck, unfortunately, was in one of his bad tempers. He refused even to read the poems. He said very angrily that he was very busy and had all the poets he wanted—Marmontel, Sedaine. . . . Alas!

Two years later, in 1776, the rôles were changed; it was Gluck who approached Goethe. They were sad days for Gluck. In April he had lost his adored niece, Nanette Marianna, "the little Chinese girl," the nightingale whose voice was so frail and pathetic. She died at the age of seventeen. Gluck received the terrible news in Paris, on the morning after the first performance of *Alceste*, which had been a complete failure. He was grief-stricken; nothing mattered any longer; music meant nothing to him; he would not compose again. . . . Yes, he would write one

more song in which all his love, all his despair, should cry aloud to the world. He wrote to Klopstock, he wrote to Wieland. Both referred him to Goethe, and it was Wieland who put Gluck's request before his young fellow-poet. Goethe was greatly moved; he began to give the matter some thought. "My heart is filled with sadness," he wrote to Frau von Stein; "I am writing a poem for Gluck on the death of his niece."

It seems, however, that the plan which he had conceived for this was too vast. He did not find the quiet frame of mind required for such a work, and so he gave it up.

But there was yet another and more powerful star rising in Goethe's heaven, Handel. To Goethe, Handel remained one of the gods of Olympus, although he had hardly any further opportunities of hearing his music in the little town. This was probably one of the grounds on which his friendship with Zelter was based.

It was a performance of the *Messiah* which had decided the musical career of the young master-mason; it had moved him so deeply that he sobbed bitterly as he walked on foot from Potsdam to Berlin, after the performance (1783). The two friends were haunted by this great work, to such a point that later they decided to write together an immense oratorio which would stand worthily beside the *Messiah*. In letters dating from 1816, Goethe sketched out the basic ideas of the plan:

"The two ideas: Necessity and Liberty. . . . In this circle everything is to be found in which man is interested. . . ."

The work was to begin with the thunder on Mount Sinai,

the "Thou shalt," and to end with Christ's resurrection, and the "Thou shalt be."

It has been justly pointed out that although this plan so enthusiastically conceived did not mature, the second *Faust* profited by several of its inspirations; the Epilogue in Heaven is its direct result. Who would ever have thought that *Faust*, in this magnificent peroration, is the indirect heir of Handel?

We shall see later how the exultant and illuminating art of Handel affected Goethe's imperious tastes in religious music. There was, in fact, a preëstablished harmony between him and this form of art. "It is," he once said, "as if I heard at a distance the sound of the sea."

Towards the close of the year 1785 another star began to shine in his firmament—Mozart. Goethe then heard, for the first time, the opera *Il Seraglio*, in Weimar.

He was delighted with it. But this opera was a serious blow to him, for just then he and Kayser were making great efforts to evolve a form of comedy with music. Suddenly, at a single stroke, Mozart wiped out all they had done, realized all they hoped to achieve, and surpassed their utmost ambitions. Goethe, however, was not so narrow-minded as to bear him any ill-will. From the day on which Goethe became the director of the Weimar theatre, Mozart reigned supreme, and his reign endured.

We must not forget that, for twenty-six years, from May, 1791, to April, 1817, the climax of his life, Goethe undertook a task which to us seems ungrateful and out of all proportion to his genius, namely, the direction of a provincial theatre where not only plays, but operas also, were given. He took this work very seriously, especially

until 1808, when the perpetual quarrels incited by the prima-donna Karolina Jagemann, who was the recognized mistress of the duke, and who used her position to impose her will on the management of the theatre, caused him the utmost disgust. But during the long period of his direction, 600 pieces were performed, of which 104 were operas, and 31 *Singspiele* (ballad operas). Mozart's works easily held the first place.

Until the advent of Schiller's dramas, Mozart remained the first favourite; after Schiller's death, opera again outweighed drama. Goethe's best pieces, *Faust*, *Tasso*, *Iphigenie*, *Götz von Berlichingen*, were played only long after they were written and on rare occasions. More frequently we find his lighter works, his *Singspiele*, of which even the most popular, *Jery and Bätely*, was given 24 times only. Mozart's supremacy in this theatre is therefore incontestable.

That Goethe agreed with the public verdict is proved by a famous letter to Schiller. The latter had expressed to his friend the great hopes which he had founded on opera; he was even of the opinion that "just as once upon a time tragedy was evolved from the choruses of the ancient feasts of Bacchus, it would again emerge from opera, but in a nobler form," because opera was free from the slavish imitation of nature, and in its art had "free play." "You could have seen your expectation of the future of opera realized to a high degree in *Don Juan*. But this work remains unique, and with Mozart's death all hope of hearing anything like it is lost."

He expressed the same regret towards the end of his life, when he deplored with Eckermann, in 1829, that he

could find no suitable music for *Faust*. "It is quite impossible," said Goethe. "The music would have to be in the character of *Don Juan*. Mozart should have composed it."

It is said that the last songs which Goethe heard were melodies from *Don Juan*, which his grandson Walther sang him on the evening of March 10th.

Dramatic music was not sufficient for Goethe. He also liked sacred music on a large scale, and chamber music. But in the execution of both kinds of music, sacred or secular, there was one inexorable law which Goethe imposed on his musicians and which governed the choice of his programs; he would have none of the tendency, then so common in Germany, to whining, to religious lamentations and love laments, to what he called "graveyard music." Though the particular circumstances of that period would have admitted, or even prompted, melancholy, this energetic man forbade its expression. He cursed the weeping-willow poets who had opened the flood-gates of this mournful inundation, among them Matthisson and Tiedge, both friends of Beethoven.

What Goethe demanded both of sacred and of secular music was that it should set free the joy of living, moral confidence, whole-hearted energy, and above all, the impulse of reason; it should encourage the spirit of clearness of thought, the sense of the eternal, contempt for pettiness and nothingness. In that he is blood brother to Handel. What would not these two together have done, the Apollo of Weimar and the English Hercules? This preference was undoubtedly detrimental to Beethoven, yet he would

have been the first to approve of it. It was not Beethoven's fault if he did not follow the same road as Handel. It was an ideal which greatly attracted him, but which the tormented soul of the man prevented his attaining. Besides, let us make no mistake; for Goethe, too, Handel represented an ideal, whose faculty for abundant joyousness in music and whose serene mind attracted him all the more because he himself did not possess them, as he told his friend Councillor von Müller.

He compared himself to Napoleon and contrasted himself with him; Napoleon loved only tender and melancholy music because these qualities were opposed and complementary to his own character. Goethe said that soft and sentimental melodies depressed him: "I need lively and energetic music to grip and uplift me. Napoleon, who was a tyrant, needed softness in music. I, for the very reason that I am not a tyrant, love lively, gay, merry music. Man aspires always to be what he is not." Should we therefore be justified in saying that in Beethoven he avoided what he himself was . . . what he himself did not desire to be? . . .

In his choir, in his home, he cultivated gay secular music, folksong especially, and virile sacred music. He was also very fond of string quartets; it was, indeed, the form of instrumental music he liked best. Here again he agreed with Beethoven whose real and essential nature found expression from beginning to end in the string quartet. . . . The quadriga suited Apollo . . . What Goethe derived above all from this form of music was a pleasure founded on reason. He disliked, however, the violent shocks which the new instrumental music afforded. He

must have conceived it as an attack upon the liberty of the mind, which is thus surprised and brutally violated. All that the mind could not grasp thoroughly, all that he summed up in the word *meteorisches* (of meteoric quality), was suspect, even antagonistic to him. Very probably, under this term he condemned, or at least segregated, Weber's operas and some of Beethoven's symphonies, the feasts of Dionysus, the orgies, the hurricanes as he called them.

At this moment, just as the springs of his musical knowledge seemed to fail, his horizon was suddenly widened enormously by his intercourse with Bach.

The Bachs were well known in Weimar where they had neighbours and relatives. John Sebastian came to Weimar on two occasions, once in 1703 for a few months and then in 1708 for nine months, as organist and *Kapellmeister*. His Weimar pupils maintained his traditions in that town for half a century. Moreover, the dowager duchess, who came from Brunswick and was a good musician, had studied under John Ernest Bach, of Eisenach, who had followed her to Weimar. It is very probable that she often played John Sebastian's works to Goethe.

Goethe must also have met many other admirers of John Sebastian, for there were many of them in those days: there was, for instance, young Count Wolf Baudissin who used to say that he was ready to die for Bach, much to Goethe's disgust. Goethe's friend Rochlitz, the historian of music, had in 1800 reminded the all-too-forgetful German people that the last surviving daughter of Bach was living in utter poverty, and had asked the public to send

donations for her: Beethoven was a warm supporter of this charitable appeal. Lastly Zelter had in 1810 given short lectures to Goethe on John Sebastian and his great rivals or forerunners. Goethe, therefore, was well informed of Bach's importance and of his place in the evolution of music.

Goethe saw far beyond John Sebastian and that pre-classic age of which the men of letters and even the musicians of his day knew so little. He was well acquainted with the vocal polyphony of the sixteenth century. He had discovered its beauty during his stay in Rome, in Lent 1788, at the Sistine Chapel, and his friend Christoph Kayser had helped him to understand it. They had listened together assiduously to the *a cappella* works by Palestrina, Morales, and Allegri. In Milan they had studied the Ambrosian chants.

All this, however, did not satisfy his intellectual hunger. In music, as in all other branches of knowledge, his mind sought to deduce a scientific theory from his experiences and the facts which came to his knowledge. He sought to establish a *Tonlehre* (Theory of Musical Sounds) as a parallel to his *Colour Theory*. His aim was the discovery, in the multiplicity of phenomena, of the primitive and central Unit. ("So everything must become one, everything must issue from one source, and must revert to it").

Goethe was unable to carry out his plan, but the scheme was never abandoned. So keen was his interest in it, that, as late as the year 1827, he had the main lines of his *Tonlehre* written out elaborately on a large sheet, which he framed and hung in his bedroom. Although, according

to his own admission, he never got beyond the mere skeleton of this science, his theories are considered worthy of discussion by some authoritative writers on music of our present day.

We see then how wide and prolonged Goethe's musical experience had been; he had played himself, he had heard a great variety of musical performances, he had meditated upon music, he had studied its history and science. What then were his shortcomings, what was there in the music of the time which escaped him?

Intellectually, very little indeed. The new tendencies which were working in were felt by him as well as by others. In June, 1805, when he was writing a commentary on *Le Neveu de Rameau*, he distinguished between two musical schools—the Italian, essentially vocal and melodic, and the German, instrumental and harmonic—and he longed for the advent of the master, who, uniting the two, should introduce into instrumental music the forces of sentiment.

He was right, and his conclusion should have been, "The master has come . . . he is Beethoven." But at that time Goethe had not yet heard any of his music.

Did Goethe lay down any limits to the expressive and descriptive powers of the art of sound? No; when in 1818 Adalbert Schoepke asked him, "What are the limits of expression in music?" Goethe answered, "It is the great and noble privilege of music to create a mood within us without using ordinary exterior means for the purpose."

These are exactly Beethoven's principles—rather an expression of feelings than a pictorial representation. More than that, Goethe recognized that music is privileged to

go further than reason, and to penetrate regions forever closed to speech and analytic intelligence. In his conversations with Eckermann on "demoniacal matters" he referred to the unconscious poetry, for the comprehension of which intelligence and reason prove insufficient, and continued:

"The same applies in the highest degree to music, because music occupies so lofty a plane that reason cannot approach it; from music emanates an influence which dominates all, an influence of which no man may give an account."

Would it then not have been possible for Beethoven and Goethe to agree? What was the stumbling-block to Goethe's musical understanding? As far as intellectual understanding is concerned, there was none. But his physiological tolerance failed him when those natural limits were reached which advanced age imposes on organic sensitiveness. It was asking too much of a man of the time of Cimarosa, Haydn, and Mozart to share the feelings of the age of Weber, Schubert, and Berlioz. Is any one of us capable of a complete rejuvenation after half a century of life? The only new musical genius whom Goethe could normally have adopted and incorporated in himself during the cycle of his life was Beethoven.

Our survey of Goethe's musical disposition would be far from complete if we merely considered its passive side—hearing and understanding. A powerful nature, a mind such as his, receives nothing without restoring it enriched and ennobled. Wherever Goethe passed, he created.

Music was never to him what it is to great musicians,

namely the means of perfecting speech. It is the poet's words which perfect music.

In this both musician and poet are right, if in each case the result is a work of genius, for it absorbs the whole of the world within them, the total ego. The proportions of the elements employed by the ego for its conception and self-expression may vary, but the sum total remains the same. A Goethe is a musician in poetry, just as a Beethoven is a poet in music. Those who are only musicians, those who are only poets, are but minor princes, whose powers do not extend beyond the borders of their little provinces. But Goethe and Beethoven are emperors of the soul of the whole universe.

Translated by G. A. Pfister and E. S. Kemp.

GOETHE'S PERENNIAL MESSAGE

By DAGOBERT D. RUNES

THE PERENNIAL power of the great man dwells not in his logical systems but in the temper of his personality. There is no compulsion in syllogisms. The great man lives a brief while and departs, leaving his hieroglyphic signature upon the universe: a painting, an arrangement of words, a building of stone or steel, or a social institution—and beyond all other material records, that memorial of more subtle texture, his life itself. These are the dead marks which his brothers of another century may decipher, in *their* swift moment of light and shadow, and reading, understand. Yet these mute symbols, for all their fossil-nature, retain this much of vitality, that they may be comprehended by the living, through the sympathies of common humanity, through a recognition which springs from the heart, not from the mind.

The intellect is jealous of the heart's urbanity and would reduce the objects of man's knowledge to objects of thought. The great man, once dead, must submit to his commentators, who will be taking the measure of his monuments; they will find in his writings a closely woven argument with major and minor premises and well-reasoned conclusions. His inconsistencies will be smoothed away; he will be made acceptable to the intellect. And when the great man is dissected and analyzed and subdued

to a formula, he will be relegated to the scholastic museum, for schoolboys to gape at.

These labors are superficial—almost irrelevant, as far as social history is concerned. The biologists, men of science, are now realizing that the life of an organism is not to be discovered in the structure of its dead body, but in the intricate microcosm of delicate adjustments whereby the living organism maintains its organic personality. How much less, then, may the great man's personality be exhibited plain upon a trellis-work of logic. Yet despite the analysts, values endure. The great man's nature, fused in the crucible of circumstance, is transmuted into a symbol, the image of a personality, the hieroglyphic of an attitude towards life. And it is through the immediate expressions of their wills and their tempers that the great minds of the world persist as dynamic forces in the lives of their posterity.

Indeed, what do the people know of their prophets? Not the logic of their teachings, not even the best of their gospels, but only the temper of them has become permanent. The Letter fades; the Spirit abides. This is true not only of our religious leaders but also of our political and social apostles, our philosophers, our creative artists. What, for instance, is the system of Plato's philosophy? Plato had no coherent system of philosophy, although systems have been deduced from his writings or read into them. Yet the personality of Plato is one of the most powerful factors in the shaping of western thought.

Goethe likewise subscribed to no one system of metaphysics. His philosophical allegiances were transitory; he

continually reorganized his thought in terms of new systems. Of the three men who influenced him most deeply, Shakespeare, Linnè, and Spinoza, only the poet and the naturalist evoked his lifelong admiration; the philosopher was supplanted in his esteem by other thinkers.

Goethe was not merely indifferent to philosophy. He had an active and inborn antipathy for the theoretical systematization of thought so pedantically cultivated among his German contemporaries. "I confess that I cannot get along with philosophy when it aims at separation and division, and I dare say that it has sometimes harmed me by interfering with my natural progress. But when philosophy unifies, or rather confirms, our instinctive feelings of identity with nature, when it strengthens that feeling and transmutes it into profound and calm contemplation, in whose perpetual syncrisis and diacrisis we lead a divine though forbidden life, then, indeed, is philosophy welcome to me."

Thus for Goethe philosophy was more than the *mensovert* or desk-directed speculations of metaphysicians like Schelling. "Let us hope and trust that another century may witness a vast change in us, and that within that time, instead of being abstract students, we shall have become men."

Goethe conceived of philosophy as action, as the realization of thought in terms of the life-process, just as his art was the realization of beauty in terms of the life-process. "Our safest course is to convert all that is in us and of us into an action, leaving the rest of the world to discuss this action according to their ability and powers."

In Goethe's deep aversion to the typical German aca-

demic philosopher and system-seeking philosophaster we find the true cause of the poet's apparent snobbishness towards his fellow-men. Well he knew "how disheartening it is to see a great man lionized by a party of block-heads." He had no desire for the praise of the academicians; least of all did he wish his thoughts to be systematized. Besieged by unwelcome visitors eager to shine in his reflected glory, he defended himself by shutting the door against them.

Goethe's voluntary seclusion is to be interpreted as a manifestation, not of snobbishness, but of his essential simplicity of spirit. This man, so humble by nature, could not endure hero-worship. Rather than posture complaisantly before the idolatrous multitude, he assumed that "Olympian dignity" which was in reality only the isolation of a retiring and self-contained spirit. "The greatest men,—men whose glances embraced the heavens and the earth, were always very humble, aware of the ways by which they had risen to such eminence."

Idolatry, dulled by its own incense, stares from afar. It abstracts the great man from the warm realities of his own life. It formulates him, depriving him of any genuine meaning in the actual life of the devotee. Hero-worship sets bars about its deity, fixing the vital temper of a man within the strait confines of a system. Goethe's rejection of the halo was profoundest wisdom, springing from the very depths of his temperament. Adulation he scorned, but for true sympathy he had a fine regard. True sympathy does not define our ideals but amplifies them, and that to Goethe is its value. "The object of life is life itself."

"The object of life is life itself." The realization of beauty in life and the realization of thought in life—this is Goethe's perennial message. This is the essential temper of the man, and it is this that gives to his life and his work a permanent significance.

GOETHE'S PAGANISM IN ART AND RELIGION

By THOMAS MANN

I

ART is objective, creative contemplation, closely bound up with nature. Critique, on the other hand, is the moralizing, analyzing attitude toward life and nature. In other words, critique is spirit; whereas creation is the preoccupation of the children of God and nature.

Goethe regarded his own inborn poetic gift "quite as nature." His tolerance, his attitude of live and let live, the complaisance of his character, are all consonant with this view. They are based on the Spinozistic concept of the perfectitude and necessity of all being, on the idea of a world free from final ends and final causes, in which evil has its rights like good. "We struggle," he declares, "to perfect the work of art as an end in itself. They, the moralists, think of the ulterior effect, about which the true artist troubles himself as little as nature does when she makes a lion or a humming-bird." It is a primary maxim with him that art is as inimical to purpose as nature herself; and this is the point where the follower of Spinoza sympathizes with Kant, who conceives detached contemplation as the genuine aesthetic state, thus making a fundamental distinction between the aesthetic-creative principle and the ethical-critical one. "When," says Goethe, "philosophy

confirms and enhances our original feeling of our oneness with nature, turning it into a profound and tranquil contemplation, then I welcome it."

I could cite ten or twelve other places in his works, where in the name of art he repudiates the moral sanction—which indeed is always social as well. "It is possible, I suppose, for a work of art to have a moral effect; but to demand from the artist a moral purpose and intention is to spoil his craft for him." "I have, in my trade as a writer, never asked myself: How shall I be of service to the world at large? All I have ever done was with the view of making myself better and more full of insight, of increasing the content of my own personality; and then only of giving utterance to what I had recognized as the good and the true."

II

Goethe's alleged devotion to paganism (in the *Wanderjahre* he reckons Judaism among the ethnic and heathen folk-religions) would lead us accordingly to expect of him an outlook basically anti-humanistic and folk-national. That we should be entirely wrong in this expectation, as a basic constitution in him, as "nature," might be arguable. However, so far as he was himself aware, he was consciously a humanist and a citizen of the world. Despite all his nature Olympian and divine, he was in a high degree Christian in spirit. Nietzsche placed Goethe, historically and psychologically speaking, between Hellenism and pietism; and thus expressed the combination of creative and critical, simple and "sentimental," ancient and modern in

Goethe's character. For Goethe's "pietism" is of course nothing else than his modernity.

Many centuries of Christian cultivation of the subjective were needed to make possible a work like *Werther*. Which is as much as to say that in the impulse to autobiography, Christian and democratic elements are mingled with that naïve, spoilt-darling claim on the world's affections of which we spoke above.

Goethe, with all his aversion to the "Cross," did often and expressly acknowledge his reverence for the Christian idea. It is significant as it is surprising to come upon the idea of the sanctity of suffering in the Pedagogic Province; and if Goethe saw in the "Church" elements of weakness and instability" and in its precepts *Gar viel Dummes*, still he bore witness that "there is in the gospels an effective resplendence and majesty, issuing from the person of Christ, of a character in which only the divine appear upon this earth." "The human spirit," he says, with sympathetic and openly acknowledged fellowship, "will never rise higher than the majesty and moral elevation of Christianity, as it radiates from the Gospels." But Goethe's Christianity manifests itself in the admirable attitude, as of a pupil to a master, which he had toward Spinoza, whom he called "theissimus" and of whom he said that nobody had spoken of the Divinity so like the Saviour as he.

If, indeed, the dualistic separation of God and nature is the fundamental principle of Christianity, then Spinoza was a pagan, and Goethe was too. But God and nature are not all the world; there is the human, the humane, as well; and Spinoza's conception of humanity is Christian, in so far as he defines the phenomenon man as the becoming-

conscious of the God-nature in the human being, as bursting forth out of mere dull being and living; accordingly, as liberation from nature, and so as *spirit*. Again, there is absolutely nothing pagan about that famous "Mastery of the Passions By their Analysis;" and just as little in the Spinozistic motive of renunciation, which becomes the general motive of Goethe's life and work, like the idea of freedom for Schiller and the idea of redemption by Wagner.

On the contrary, it was just this pathos of renunciation, which cast such a Christian shade upon the pagan, aristocratic, child-of-nature well-being of Goethe's life and lent his spirited features an expressly Gothic trait of suffering not to be overlooked, save by the gross popular belief in his aristocratic good fortune. How much resignation must have darkened the end of this apparently consummate and favoured existence! His life-work, though almost super-human, remained entirely a fragment—it is putting it mildly to say that "not all the dreams of blossoms ripened"—Wagner's performance, for instance, or Ibsen's is incomparably more a rounded and effective whole.

One may put it that Goethe's spirit was far more powerful than his nature, greater than his power to give it form or than his organically allotted span; and it is easy to understand that vehement demand of his for immortality, which is one of the magnificent, daemonic expressions of his personality: Nature, he cried, was bound to give him a new body when the one he had could no longer sustain his spirit.

GOETHE—A WORLD FIGURE

By FREDERICK B. ROBINSON

BEFORE THE dawn of that historical cycle of which we are a part, men lived in scattered groups with little communication between them. Each family or tribe with domestic routine had its own experiences and developed its own practical life, traditions, folklore and mythology. Of course there were leaders of thought and action in their communities. Little by little, through migrations, wars and conquests the various cultures became intermingled, and with the development of means of transportation and communication larger and larger areas acquired a broader and richer civilization because of the contributions of people who formerly were separated. This process of integration continued as family culture gave way successively to that of the tribe, the city, the state, the nation, and the world. The process is still going on and we are evolving a world civilization which draws upon the experience, wisdom and achievements of all men of all races and of all ages. It is as though parts of a majestic organ capable of ineffable harmonies had been scattered far and wide by a divine hand so that men might, little by little, find the various pipes, stops, keys and pedals and slowly assemble them and with them play first limited melodies, then more beautifully balanced hymns, then fugues of greater power and finally sustained compositions of gloriously com-

mingled sounds reflecting the highest reaches of wisdom, love and faith.

We cannot here trace the steps of mankind from the deep jungles of primordial ignorance through the mastery of mechanical devices, the formulation of scientific knowledge, the improvement of social organization and the expression of inner life through music, art and literature. But we may observe that in each stage of this progression there were but few who grasped the grandeur of the process, understood its details and consciously furthered it in action or by interpretation to others. Most men can see but a short distance; they are narrow, provincial, confined and limited. Few are free citizens of the world, embracing in their conception the whole of man's resources and playing parts of importance to the ages. Even now most of us have only a contemporary and national range or even a town or village outlook. Goethe's mind was universal and his messages, echoing that universality, are not for his own time and race but for all men and for many ages.

It is difficult to compare Goethe with anyone else, but our conception of a world figure may be made somewhat clear by reference to others who, regardless of differences in their best contributions to humanity, were world conscious and who consequently acted with a broad understanding of the race heritage. Goethe most resembled Leonardo da Vinci. Though the great Florentine expressed himself to posterity principally through his paintings, while the German lives in his poetry, both were widely travelled, both were courtiers and played their parts in public service, both delved into the sciences, took a lively interest in all the arts and sought underlying principles of

aesthetics. Both were insatiable in their search for new knowledge, and painstaking craftsmen in perfecting their own art forms through which to give their messages to the world. There was no important field of human speculation which they did not explore. Each saw his daily task against a background of humanity's past efforts and achievements. Although one was an Italian of the Renaissance and the other a German at the beginning of the era of nationalism on a large scale, and each bore the stamp of his origin, both became, in art and science, brothers of the master minds of all time, and they were concerned with broad movements which affected humanity as a whole. Had they performed no service of preeminence, they would have been intellectual citizens of the world, but their own achievements made them commanding figures in that world.

Another man of capacious mind, nearer to Goethe's period and indeed partly contemporaneous with him, was Benjamin Franklin. In externals they differed widely but in essential character they were very much alike even down to their amorous weaknesses. Franklin's family was poor, Goethe's wealthy; Franklin had to work hard to pay his own way even from early youth, Goethe was over indulged with affluence; Franklin had to dig out his knowledge almost unaided and against odds, Goethe was embarrassed by such abundance of help from the great universities of the old world that he grew disdainful of their ministrations; Poor Richard consorted with plebeians, Goethe with patricians. Nevertheless they were alike in fundamentals. Both sought to assimilate the permanent knowledge of the race and achieved thereby a breadth of view which made

evident their luminous intelligences. Franklin's contributions were to the practical establishment of democracy in action, Goethe was concerned not with practical affairs but with the expression of ideas. The important point of likeness lies in the fact that both, as they played their selected roles, drew upon the wisdom of all time. Goethe was the only continental writer who was hailed by all Europeans of his day as their own, while Franklin was universally greeted as the diplomatic leader of a new social and political order.

Among the prophets of the civilization which now enfolds us, Franklin stands first in civil order, Darwin in science and Goethe in literature. There are two aspects of human achievement: one is to know or become aware of truth, the other is to express it. All world figures have had the insatiable thirst for knowledge, but each one has his own method of objectifying that which knowledge generated in him. Much has been made of Goethe's observations and theories concerning the scientific branches of mineralogy, geology and botany, of his forecast of modern beliefs concerning evolution, of his studies of color phenomena, of his interest in music and his ability in art. Some even consider him a master in all these fields. But their view springs from little knowledge on their own part. His wide-spread interests but reveal the inquiring mind, sensitive to all with which it came into contact. His readings and observations in these fields did not place him among the masters of science and art; they were the background of his expression as a poet; they were part of the explorations of a soul as it developed and then spoke to the world in literature.

Goethe was a forerunner of Darwin and an anticipator of Cuvier only in the sense that the Greek atomist Democritus may be called a forerunner of those modern magicians of mathematical physics Thompson, Stark and Bohr who have made their revelations of the drama within the infinitesimal atom of modern scientific conception. He happened to make observations in fields in which he was but partially equipped, and being endowed with intuitive intelligence and poetic imagination he expressed beautifully general hypotheses which could be rigorously maintained only by those devoting all their well-disciplined scientific talents to painstaking technical demonstrations. Goethe was essentially unscientific in his tendency to make hasty generalizations when his poetic imagination soared on the wings of an inspiring experience. I am persuaded that these generalizations, which appear in notes, correspondence and elsewhere were wayside records of wide intellectual excursions and not serious conclusions of a scientific specialist. They were the working materials of a literary man with universal interests who found, in all nature, fragments to be later woven into literature with its enchanting use of symbolism.

Do not mistake me. Of course Goethe was serious in his observations of rocks and stratifications, of flowers and colors, but the enduring importance of these studies lies in the fact that they nourished his creative power which was essentially poetic not scientific. For him, science was an inspiring handmaiden. Goethe was as incapable of saying the last word on science as Einstein is upon economics and politics. But as Einstein is a universal figure in the field of mathematical physics so Goethe was the monarch

of European letters. The master mind is in touch with all things of world interest; it is supreme in the field upon which it focuses its full light.

Goethe lived a complete life. Experience touched off his expression. In youth these experiences were unrestrained and ill assorted; in maturity they were selected in orderly manner, and from the pageant of personalities that passed before him, from the literature of Greece and Rome, the folktales of all Europe, the mysticism of the middle ages, the arts and letters of the Renaissance and the Elizabethan era, from the lore of alchemy and contemporary science and from the swift movement of current world events, he gathered the rough stones that flashed as polished jewels in his novels, criticisms, dramas and poems.

Goethe had but little use for formal philosophy and theology. His wisdom was the result of real experience. Therefore as we read his life, we review the exercises which were shaping a capacious mind and sensitive spirit. Goethe's craftsmanship lay in his mastery of literary expression which was superb whether it took the form of semi-autobiographical novel as in *Werther*, of classical tragedy as in *Iphigenie*, of the historical drama in *Goetz* and *Egmont*, or of a myriad of poetic moulds, be they ballads, the elaborate composite *Faust*, lyrics of regular beat, or free verse reminiscent of Pindar. Indeed the field of philosophy in which he came nearest to being a master was that closely related to expression—aesthetics.

Naturally one so world-minded was interested in matters beyond Frankfort and Weimar and even all Germany, and consequently, also, Goethe was appreciated beyond the boundaries of his fatherland. His admiration of Napoleon

is an example. He recognized in the great Frenchman a dynamic force that was destroying the rank growth of an older order and making way for a new day. The invasion of German principalities and the overthrow of his own patron Charles Augustus, reigning Duke of Saxen-Weimar-Eisenach, were but incidents of a great ferment in which Napoleon was the active agent.

To us Goethe's sympathy for America will be of interest. That he sensed the significance of America as the frontier of a new civilization is evident from his treatment in *Wilhelm Meister* and especially in the maturer estimate in his little poem which appeared in *Zahme Xenien* under the title *Den Vereinigten Staaten*. It begins:—

“Amerika, du hast es besser
Als unser Kontinent, das alte,
Hast keine verfallene Schlösser
Und keine Basalte.

and then he continues—as I translate—

“Your life is not disturbed by inner recollections of futile strife. Good fortune to you in the use of the present. And when perchance your young poets write, may kind fate save them from tales of knights, robbers, and spectres of the past.”

We forgive him his scientific inexactness in assuming that no basalt or igneous rock exists in America. We accept the poetic symbolism which meant that no old disturbances need restrain the free development of free men in a natural society in the new land. The error is like that in his

generous praise of Voltaire when the French cynic held Newton's theory of the spectrum up to European ridicule. Both cases are important not because of any mastery of science but because of their display of wide interest in world matters and personalities.

Another aspect of the universal literary mind is the aptness with which its comments on current happenings may be applied and found true in future ages with different details of life. Shakespeare is full of sayings of value in all ages. So is Goethe. The prelude to the First Part of *Faust* consists of a conversation between the theatrical manager, the poet, and the showman or merry-andrew. The manager says substantially, "give the public what it wants, give them thrills; you, Mr. Poet, can do the trick and bring about great box-office receipts." The poet replies (Bayard Taylor's translation):

"Speak not to me of yonder motley masses,
Whom but to see, puts out the fire of Song!
Hide from my view the surging crowd that passes,
And in its whirlpool forces us along!
No, lead me where some heavenly silence glasses
The purer joys that round the Poet throng,—
Where Love and Friendship still divinely fashion
The bonds that bless, the wreaths that crown his
passion!"

"Ah, every utterance from the depths of feeling
The timid lips have stammeringly expressed,—
Now failing, now, perchance, success revealing,—
Gulps the wild Moment in its greedy breast;
Or oft, reluctant years its warrant sealing,

Its perfect stature stands at last confessed!
What dazzles, for the Moment spends its spirit;
What's genuine, shall Posterity inherit."

The merry-Andrew falls in with the manager's idea. He wants to give excitement and fun to the audience and let posterity take care of itself. But the poet insists:—

"You do not feel, how such a trade debases;
How ill it suits the Artist, proud and true!
The botching work each fine pretender traces
Is, I perceive, a principle with you."

and in a later reply says:—

"Go, find yourself a more obedient slave!
What! shall the Poet that which Nature gave,
The highest right, supreme Humanity,
Forfeit so wantonly, to swell your treasure?"

Even now we must choose between the box office appeal to the populace and the inspiration of genius.

How appropriate to our day is the Council scene in Act 1 of Second *Faust* where the chancellor says:—

"One plunders flocks, a woman one,
Cup, cross, and candlestick from altar,
And then to boast it does not palter,
Of limb or life nowise undone.
To Court behold the plaintiffs urging,
Where puffs the judge on cushions warm,
And swells, meanwhile, with fury surging,
Rebellion's fast-increasing storm!

His easy way through crime is broken,
 Who his accomplices selects;
 And 'Guilty!' hears one only spoken
 Where Innocence itself protects.
 They all pull down what they should care for,—
 Destroy their weal, in self-despite:
 How can the sense develop, therefore,
 Which, only, leads us to the Right?
 At last, the man of good intent
 To flatterer and briber bendeth;
 The judge, debarred from punishment,
 Mates with the felon, ere he endeth."

The general in chief wants to keep up armaments and have appropriations to keep up his war establishment. The treasurer says:—

"Trust allies, and we soon shall rue us!
 The subsidies they promised to us—
 Like water in leaky pipes—don't come.
 Who, therefore, now will help his neighbor?
 Each has enough, to help himself.
 The gate of gold no more unlatches,
 And each one gathers, digs, and scratches,
 While our strong-box is void indeed."

The lord high steward complains of lack of food, the City Council is a drain upon his resources and he is sure the money lenders will get him in their power.

All have troubles and grievances until Mephistopheles—The Devil—satisfies them all with *gld*.

Of course the perennial appropriateness of Goethe's

wisdom springs from his great insight into human nature which was the result of his intelligent use of a life packed with experience. His world significance was testified to by the esteem in which he was held by the people of all lands, the numerous translations made by poets who were eminent in their own right, and the innumerable biographies and cultural studies of the works made by writers from Coleridge and Taylor to Croce and Ludwig.

Goethe lived just at the period when manorial life was giving way, through the industrial revolution, to the age of power production, world commerce and international banking; when petty principalities were being consolidated into great powers; when art and letters were emerging from classical imitation in the one hand and sickly romanticism on the other to free and vigorous use of new forms shackled to neither; when the ideals of individual liberty and the rights of man were making headway against the divine rights of kings and when science was freeing itself through systematic experiment from the inertia of bookish tradition. All this Goethe sensed and he was ready to welcome the new. This he did, not as a youthful enthusiast disregarding the heritages of the past, but as a clear eyed sage who knew that progress must be sure, orderly and calm.

Here indeed is a man! One who proceeded from the passions of youth to the serenity of age, who savored every human experience, who communed with the literary masters of all ages, who essayed in the realms of science and who, mastering the devices of literary expression, left future generations a wealth of ideal joy and wisdom.

GREAT MOMENTS IN GOETHE'S LIFE

By ALLEN W. PORTERFIELD

*Greift nur hinein in's volle Menschenleben;
 Ein jeder lebt's, nicht vielen ist's bekannt.
 Und wo ihr's packt, da ist's interessant.*

It is at once the inescapable duty and inestimable privilege of anyone who would cull out from the long life of Goethe the pivotal moments around which epoch-marking incidents revolved, and from which epoch-making achievements ensued, never to lose sight of the significance of the three immortal lines prefixed to this paper. Goethe had no small moments. From womb to tomb he plunged into the current of life, found it interesting wherever he took hold, and was never unmindful of the solemn fact that while everyman lives a life, it is given to but few to appreciate, understand, or visualize in its concatenated entirety the meaning of individual existence. He himself never failed to do this; he was one of the rare men of whom it could never be said that he did not know that he was alive.

It is for precisely this reason that periods in his life which might appeal to lesser men as having been a total loss were periods of great gain to him. Here as everywhere in this essay, one illustration must suffice. Viewed from the angle of either tradition or mediocrity, the bleakest and blackest months of his life were from September 1768

to April 1770. On the former date he returned from Leipzig to his parents in Frankfort-am-Main. They had sent him to the University with the most hopeful of hopes. Nothing had been spared to change him "from a fool to a doctor." He returned home a very sick lad. As fast as one part of his wracked body recovered another revealed the symptoms and ached with the pains of another illness. General convalescence was slow. But it is exceedingly difficult fully to appraise all the ways in which he grew during those twenty months. They were months of incubation and rumination. Shakespeare, Rousseau, Lessing, and Lawrence Sterne were only four of the great writers he read. He came for the first time to a clear understanding of the value of his mother, the worth of his sister, and, if we may believe his autobiography, the real nature of his father. Through that "fair soul," Susanna von Klettenberg, he came to know the spiritual life. Through the work of that fair critic, Gottfried Arnold, he came to see that a man may question the tenets of established theology without losing his soul. And as a result of it all, he set forth in the spring of 1770 to the glorious University of Strassburg in Alsace bearing no more relation to his Leipzig self than an immature and dissipated stripling bears to a young man of health, vigor, and reassuring maturity. He was never again destined to live through such dark and uncreative days, as days are calculated and evaluated by those who never find it possible to emigrate from humdrumdom; but for Goethe they were potentially days of lasting re-formation. Goethe had no small moments; for he was a great man.

When we ascribe greatness to Goethe however, and it is on a par with the ascription of roundness to the earth,

we must accept him as he was. No one can familiarize oneself with the man without wishing that he had been different. Why, for example, did he cherish and even take an unenviable pride in certain puny hates? Why did he dislike dogs, tobacco in any form, and daily newspapers? Why did he find it a mark of affectation in people when they wore glasses, as though everyone were blessed with eyes as good as his? Why did he, just like a quiet small person, do everything in his old days to conceal the fact that he was hard of hearing? And why, above all other why's, did he not make an effort to cultivate at least a slight sense of humor? There is no answer to such questions; we must take or leave the Goethe we have.

The life of the Goethe we have is the most fully recorded of any modern man; and yet there are mysteries about it which can never be solved. Of these one of the most fetching and taunting is the meeting he had at Erfurt on October 2, 1808, with Napoleon. Some of his biographers, whose powers of dogmatic statement greatly exceed their ability to furnish the proofs, are of the settled conviction that this was one of the happiest and greatest moments Goethe ever lived; and unfortunately there are isolated statements in Goethe's own works that seem to bear them out. What are the facts?

If Goethe displayed any pronounced unwillingness to seeing Napoleon under the circumstances, let us be charitable and charge it up to the fact that his mother had died just a few days before. At the time Napoleon was forty, Goethe sixty. Napoleon had buccaneered around over Europe for no good reason, trampled a million stalwart men into the dust of death, and was prepared to bequeath

to humanity, in return for these, a tuberculous son. Goethe had written, with negligible exceptions, all the works for which he is now famous. Napoleon was eating his breakfast, and kept on eating during the interview, while Goethe stood in the corner and said yes, yes. Even a child is taught not to speak with its mouth full. Had Goethe been a different sort of man, he would have said at the very first question Napoleon put to him: "Sire, if I am to speak to you, you will have to quit chewing." Napoleon stated that Goethe made a mistake when, in *The Sufferings of Werther*, he added to the motif of love that of ambition as one of the factors in the ultimate taking off of the protagonist. Goethe replied, "I quite agree with you." It is wholly impossible for any critic to prove that Goethe made a mistake when he introduced the motif of ambition into his *Werther*.

The above are the facts when we write under the urge of the wish that Goethe had been different. But Goethe *war am Ende, was er war*, to paraphrase Mephistopheles. And—fortunately or unfortunately, no man will ever be able to tell—Goethe's meeting with Napoleon was an unforgettable moment in Goethe's life, though he flatly refused to follow Napoleon's snap advice and never executed his brash commands. As to Napoleon, however it was indubitably *Erfurt* that invested him with immortality as much as his best battlefield.

Space is always precious when writing on Goethe; let us confine ourselves to the unquestionably great moments of his life. And the first of these was the one for which he was in no way responsible: His birth in Frankfurt-am-Main as the sole surviving son of Johann Kaspar Goethe

and Elisabeth Textor Goethe. No man can tell; we again run into the controversial reef of what might have been. There is sound reason however for believing that Goethe would never have succeeded had he not had, from the Main to the Ilm, everything he wanted in the way of physical comfort. It is an odd fact that he was the first and last poet of significance ever to have been born in that particular German town whose bankers saved the American Government from financial ruin in 1865. The Goethes were wealthy. Goethe himself never had to struggle as did Lessing and Schiller, Winckelmann and Herder.

His father was a man of sound education and broad travel; his mother was a woman who, though not formally educated (no German women were at the time), possessed quite unusual gifts of the innate sort. Goethe's home, one of the sights of Frankfurt to this day, was a house of many mansions. The walls were lined with shelves containing the best of world literature bound in the best of leathers. There were paintings in abundance and sculpture which, like the paintings, had been purchased on the ground. Of distractions of the select sort, Frankfurt was then one of the real centres. Goethe was given every conceivable advantage. Never had a poet before him, and very few since, enjoyed such downright luxury. One reads with something not far from irritating envy that his father furnished him, during the three years he was loafing at Leipzig, the equivalent to-day of four hundred gold Marks a month, despite the fact that a student of 1932 laboring at Leipzig can get along well indeed on half that amount and at least take his degree on a fourth of it. Goethe began life in wealth and never knew anything else. With the possible, though

unrecorded, exception of a few German "writers" who reaped real royalties from manufactured hymnals and psalters just after the Reformation, Goethe was one of the most "successful" writers the world had ever known until we come into the days of contemporary copyright, best seller, and motion picture. He is said to have netted the equivalent of over \$100,000 on his works during his own life time, though the balance sheet that shows these figures seems to have been mislaid. Benedetto Croce may be right in calling him "the last of the court poets," but Croce fails to realize, if we may judge his written word, that Goethe began life on a courtly scale. And it may just be that the facts of his birth and parentage constitute the really greatest moment of his life, for the records are clogged with cases where the poetically gifted have gone down because of luxury and failed to rise because of ease. It may just be that we are to credit Goethe with uncommon strength of character because of the fact that he bore up so well under his unique advantages and lived a right simple life once he had sloughed off the silliness of youth.

This he did to a comforting degree during the fewer than twenty months he spent in Strassburg. He entered the town on April 2, 1770, and when he left he had touched every phase of his many-sided life, with the exception of such business engagements as eventually taught him the value of working on behalf of other individuals, and the establishment of a home. He went to Strassburg with the outward intention of studying law, taking his degree in law, and becoming a lawyer. Goethe might have made a good judge; there was hardly a tissue of his make-up that fitted him to be a lawyer, as was irrevocably proved by his

conduct during the twenty-eight cases he was later to try before abandoning the law once and for all and forever. Inwardly he went to Strassburg to perfect himself in French and become a French writer. Master of his fate? Captain of his soul? In Alsace not the slightest. It is for this reason that the greatest moment of his life was the moment he crossed the bridge that leads into the buffeted and rebuffed city of Strassburg. And during his stay there, France was the Capital of German Letters.

Here it was that he first came in contact with Genius, living and dead. He saw Gothic architecture in the Cathedral and had his soul opened to the undying grandeur of a new art type. On the shelves of his father's home had stood the works of Shakespeare and works about Shakespeare; on his arrival in Strassburg however he could not spell the name of the author of *Hamlet*, of which play he was even then marked out by the gods of happy chance to write, a quarter of a century later, the most satisfactory analysis that literature thus far has to record. It was in Strassburg that he came to know the real Shakespeare; that he cast off his French ambitions as both unworthy and unachievable; that he became a German through and through despite the fact that he himself coined the word "world literature" and gave the coinage actual significance through his own creations; that he became in short the Goethe whom the suffrage of unprejudiced students has since agreed in calling the all-round wisest man that ever lived on this earth, achieve preeminence though he did in but one single field, that of lyric poetry. In this he takes his place by the side of Homer as the world's greatest epic writer, and Shakespeare as the world's greatest dramatist.

That Goethe was able to effect so complete and enduring a metamorphosis in so brief a time was due primarily to just two people: Johann Gottfried Herder, a Protestant preacher, and poor little Friederike Brion, the daughter of a Protestant preacher. Say what we may, and bulky books have been written on the subject, what Herder did for Goethe was to call him to his senses and not to mince words in so doing. While at Leipzig, the juvenile Goethe was one of those people "who speak French fluently." Herder saw some of his French; and what was worse, he heard some of it; and he, even he, was forced to say, in substance but substantially, "Young man, you go over to France and speak that sort of French, and you will arouse nothing but fully justified derision." Goethe died without ever having so much as seen Paris. The general influence that Herder had on Goethe by way of uncovering new worlds of thought to him was incalculable, so wholly so that the issue must be allowed to rest with this blanket assurance. In letters, Goethe never met another Herder, not even in Schiller. The parallel can be set up, it has been set up, without either impiety or exaggeration that Herder was to Goethe what John the Baptist was to the Greater One that came after him. And Jean Paul was not far from wrong when he dubbed Herder the Thirteenth Apostle.

Great caution is in order in discussing Goethe's affairs with women; he immortalized all the women to whom he paid attention, either fleeting or sustained, in writing. It is for this reason that the number, depending on current ideas as to how much attention makes up an "affair," from fifty to seventy, must engross our analysis. How many women, however, may a non-writing man "know" and no

one else know it but the protagonists? But of all the women Goethe ever knew and loved, none were more loved by him than Friederike Brion. There seems no doubt that it was both physically and spiritually a tragic case; if so, Goethe passed through it with a dignity and reserve that merely emphasize its intensity, and his regard for the fortunate—unfortunate girl. Previous to Sesenheim, he had coquetted; now he loved. And the marks of this love, it is not too much to say, never left him. This means not merely that he made Friederike an existential part of some of his *chefs-d'oeuvre*, including *Faust*; it means that she taught him to write lyric poetry. Previous to Sesenheim, Goethe had tossed off lyrics that gave promise; those based on Sesenheim constitute the fulfillment. Friederike Brion, a lovely unaffected Alsatian lass routed Goethe over the road that led him in the end to the immortality that can neither be snatched from him nor made the subject of a skeptical investigation as a part of him. In his relations with her he was, as with all women, a gentleman and a poet.

The next great moment in Goethe's life was November 7, 1775, when he rode into Weimar, ostensibly to spend a few weeks, in reality to remain there the rest of his life, fifty-eight years in all. Here the biblical parallel is exchanged for a political one: Goethe bears somewhat the same relation to Duke Karl August that Bismarck later bore to Emperor William I, with this great difference; Bismarck had a sense of humor, and Karl August, though well-meaning and the nephew of Frederick the Great, ruled over a tiny statelet. There is not the slightest bit of use to ask: Was this a wise move on Goethe's part? Did German literature suffer or profit from the move? Goethe lived in

Weimar during the mature two-thirds of his life, and we have to take the Goethe that we have. Questions are out of order; an auditing of accounts is in order.

There is no use to ask why Goethe went to Weimar, for the reason is plain: He could not get along well with his father. He saw that he was quite unfitted for the law. Though born into wealth, his last five years had been lean ones: His law practice was unremunerative, and his father was in imminent danger of developing into a pinch-penny and curmudgeon. Frankfurt as a town he never did like, owing it would seem to the strained relations that always existed between him and the chief of his parental roof. Weimar itself, with its six thousand inhabitants and open sewers, could not be described as lovely; but only a few miles away lay Jena with its five thousand inhabitants and its University with a staff of professors which, as it developed under Goethe's very eyes, was never again to be excelled. The hard fact is that Goethe wanted a job; he had lived enough to see that the juxtaposition of fame and famine is always imminent and may become disastrous. With this before him, and a keener observer of men and things never lived, he received the ducal invitation, accepted, went, staid, and made the petty Duchy of Saxe-Weimar a thing of spiritual beauty and a joy for all.

Critics condemn his becoming attached to the Weimar Court on the ground that he never again wrote as he had written before. Quantitatively this is true: He wrote less than half as much during the first eleven years in Weimar as he had written in the foregoing five years and a half. Let no one complain however about Goethe's scarcity of production; it is literally about two men in a million

that reads the whole of the Goethe we have. And if we are morally bound to read the whole of Goethe when are we going to read, and who is going to read, the Manns, Wassermanns, and Hauptmanns who have written since Goethe's death? The sole sensible question is: How did Goethe's detention in Weimar affect his work and works? This question has to be answered, for if he left Strassburg a made man it remained for Weimar to determine what should be made of the makings.

Literature is an artistic visualization and faithful reflection of life. When men write odes to skylarks and nightingales it is because they know something about these birds. One may be blessed with a veritable plethora of mental agility, spiritual receptivity, technical ability, and moral diligence, but what are these, without experience; without the contact that comes from doing; without the maturity that follows on periods of restful incubation; without knowing at first hand; without working with other people; without working for other people; without realizing in season and out of season that I am I but thou art thou; without being able to see and feel that the very world about us, the civilization we have built up, is the work of many hands, the rumination of many minds, the prayers of some and the curses of others? They may be very little and of no good at all.

This was the lesson that routine life in Weimar brought home to Goethe. It is hard to see how any other German town could have rendered him the same service under as pleasing outward and inward circumstances. When he came in through the Weimar Gate on November 7, 1775, he marked an epoch in his life; when he died on March

22, 1832, he made an epoch, many of them in fact, in his own life and in the general evolution of humanity.

Goethe never went to a public school; he was privately educated. So venerable a scholar as Gervinus once remarked that, owing to this fact, Goethe never revealed a marked interest in the people as such; his head was in the clouds where gods dwell, ariels disport themselves, and the infinite allows itself to be envisaged from a distance. Had this thesis been postulated by a non-German, we could ascribe it to the soul blight that comes at times from jaundiced or international hate. But it was set up by a German and we sit nonplussed before it. In truth, the works Goethe wrote while a university student are farther removed from real people than those that came from his head and his heart while his hands were busy in Weimar. An epic such as *Hermann und Dorothea*, a drama such as *Egmont*, yea even a novel such as *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is pre-eminently popular in the right sense; and all are unthinkable without the distractions and interruptions, the interviews with nonentities and the collaboration with superiors, the bookkeeping and the conferences, the visits and the visitors, the busy hours and the idle hours, the walks, teas and appointments that were Goethe's in Weimar.

Philosophy is good, especially when it is not too tautly systematized; but it takes business to make the best of literature. It was a great moment in Goethe's life when Fate somehow set him down in this little town on the Ilm and said: Work, work, work—and when your work is done, write it all up in stories, dramas, and poems that can be read with soul-expanding pleasure by the people

of distant centuries. Goethe never became "popular" in the sense that Schiller was popular, or that Wilhelm Busch is popular; but "Goethe and the People," even "Goethe and the Laboring Classes," as seen in his creative works, is a theme the elaboration of which would necessitate the analysis of some rich nuggets of folk sympathy. And he acquired this sympathy largely during his stay in Weimar.

And Goethe had some "great moments" with women in Weimar! The two who stand out are, naturally, Frau von Stein and Christiane Vulpius. Women with Goethe were a spiritual necessity; also a biological one. Many men have tried to reconstruct Goethe's life without these two women. It is a fetching but futile bit of imagining. Goethe lived his own life, knew the value of an individual life, and is dead. The brutal facts with regard to his relations to these two women, the most enduring love affairs he ever had, are, or seem to be, these: He loved Frau von Stein platonically (what does that mean, other than the use of a cliché?) from 1775 to 1780; from 1780 to 1785 he made her, in all decent probability, his mistress; then he began to lay her aside; to lose interest in her somewhat as one might lose interest in an old model of a radio through which many broadcastings have come in and from which much passing pleasure has been derived, but in which one in time tires; new methods of diversion have been invented, and made necessary by the inevitable change that comes in time over the human heart strings. That this mother of seven children meant much to Goethe is obvious to any student of *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, and of some of his other works. But when he loved her, and the fact is again brutal, he was

loving where it was safe: he had had enough of danger at Sesenheim.

And Christiane Vulpius! Goethe's relation to her is the strangest that literary history has to record. Though she was fat, bibulous, uninstructed, and indiscreet even if well meaning, or the opposite of all this, if we may believe Paul Heyse and other "authorities," Goethe, who could flit from one woman to another with the ease that a bee manifests in leaving one bud and lighting on another, nevertheless remained true to her, or at least by her; he even married her, October 19, 1806, eighteen years after he had taken her to his bed and board, and with his son August, born on Christmas Day, 1789, standing by as his best man. It is unparalleled; the meeting with her was a great moment; for the *Roman Elegies* inspired by her belong to Goethe's great works; and he wrote but few poems nobler than the one that tells how he came to find her:

*Once through the forest
Alone I went;
To seek for nothing
Was my intent, etc.*

If we did not know that Goethe could not write such a poem except on the basis of sincerity, we might even allow the doubts that besiege the wary student's heart in this case to cajole us into fancying that he wrote the poem—and others—in her honor so that friends might be thrown off their guard to the extent of believing that he had after all not made such a huge mistake; that he was in fact right well pleased with his Christiane. But it was his relation to

her that, some authorities contend, caused the Goethe family to become extinct and the name die out forever, in 1885—the Goethe name which reaches far back into the preceding centuries, and to which the magic word *Faust* is inseparably linked despite the efforts of so many others!

Even Goethe however could not endure Weimar forever. There came a time when he had to have a change, as he himself says, for “both moral and physical” reasons. On September 3, 1786, he left for Italy, returning to Weimar on June 18, 1788. It was obviously one of the great moments of his life, although one of the most striking things about the entire sojourn is the white-heat nationalism it has since sent sizzling through histories of comparative literature. The Italians, even Croce, are of the opinion that it made Goethe; the Germans raise the question: Was the journey at all necessary, and since Goethe made it did he derive a single enduring benefit from it?

The facts, to one who can approach the issue with relative if not perfect equanimity, seem simple. Let us first emphasize the “moral and physical” reasons, and then look at the personal ones. Goethe had throughout his whole life a detestation of mere book knowledge, though he himself was a life-long and omnivorous reader. In his father’s house he had been surrounded by the fruits of Italian culture; his father before him had been in Italy. Goethe had to see the country, therefore, for himself. He went, saw, and was convinced.

Of what? First of all, that Fate had never intended him to be a plastic artist. This is a negative result, but it was in itself worth the entire journey. It takes us squarely back, too, to the days when Herder told him that his French was

bad and many of his notions even worse. Goethe made but little attempt to bring his spoken Italian up above the grade of tourist conversation. While in Italy his associates were Meyer, Hackert, Tischbein, Moser, Kauffmann and others with equally Germanic names. What he wrote he wrote in German: revisions and extensions of works long since started. Of poems from Italy we have only two, and even these are inferior to those inspired by little Friederike Brion. Of course, he gave us the *Italian Journey*, a work that anyone should know who would know Goethe, but a work that can easily be overrated, since Goethe was unable to “see” some of the really great features of Italian civilization. Toward his father’s journey before him he remained impious; a negative result again, but one that throws its own light.

The journey made him an art critic whose judgments were based more solidly than they had ever been on first-hand principles; it turned his attention to natural science in its higher reaches. It enabled him to behold, for the first time in his life, the sea, the ocean as it were. And on first looking out upon it, he exclaimed with a conventionality that is more human than illuminating, “It is a grand sight.” He was to use it later effectively in *Faust*.

All told, this is no mean sheaf of dividends; but it is only a cornucopia of bagatelles in comparison with what it might have been, were we able to conjure up and reconstruct another Goethe; for there is *Nausikaa*. Wandering over Sicily (Goethe had a brilliant chance to go over to Greece while down there, but he preferred Sicily!) and coming into unsung Taormina the contents of *Nausikaa* took shape in his mind. *Nausikaa* is a maid of wonderful

charm: Friederike Brion, Lotte Buff, and Dorothea of *Hermann und Dorothea* all in one. Of wooers she has many; and she has just as many words of refusal. Then comes the striking stranger; he is none other than Ulysses himself. Nausikaa forgets her former reticence, abandons her coy modesty, admits her love with precipitate rashness, compromises herself, and tragedy ensues. We know not what we have missed because Goethe, instead of sitting down and writing this out went around pecking on stones for geological purposes, dissecting plants for his botanical studies, and looking over dead bones in a cemetery by way of corroborating an anatomical theory. It is one place where all the world wishes he had written more and investigated less, for though he seems to have been unable to finish a number of quite German themes anywhere other than in Italy, he was also unable to finish this non-German theme once he had returned to Saxe-Weimar, where the Nausikaas were less coy at the beginning and more skilled in the end. Why he did not complete *Nausikaa* no one knows; one only knows that he was never the same after his return from the South. It was his second Strassburg; now he was forty; during the first one he was twenty.

Virtually everything that Goethe had in his mind however ran the risk of remaining uncompleted after his return from Italy; for he came back to a Germany that lacked a Goethean audience; and no one felt this more than Goethe himself. Those were days fraught with the most imminent danger: Goethe came within the proverbial hair of turning his entire attention to science. But Schiller appeared on the horizon. The two men lived in Weimar—which to-day is the equivalent of living in the same block

—from 1788 to 1794 and passed each other by with that mien of superciliousness that has never yet advanced humanity one whit. Then came the meeting of the scientific society in Jena where each saw that despite the differences in their natures, and greater differences never existed, his salvation lay in cooperation with the other. A friendship sprang up that has no equal in literary history. A thousand letters passed between the two previous to Schiller's death in 1805. Even the French can read these letters now in their own language.

Precisely how much Goethe gained from Schiller in the way of specific inspiration will remain forever a mystery; but this much is clear: Schiller inspired Goethe to stay by and stand by literature. He did not have to suggest to Goethe that formal philosophy was not every man's affair; this Goethe already knew only too well. He did have to show Goethe that while science is a marvelous field for the scientific mind (which Goethe's never was), literature is greater in that it covers the whole of life. And Goethe began to write, creatively, as he had not written since 1775.

Men are not always attracted by dissimilarities; there is the case of Ibsen and Bjórnsen in Norway. But it is more gainful to be drawn to those who are unlike ourselves; we derive complementary rather than complimentary inspiration. Goethe never was without an eye single to the main chance. That he ever loved Schiller is much to be doubted; that he greatly admired Schiller, ten years his junior, is ultra evident. That he derived more from Schiller than Schiller derived from him is pathetically clear.

Friedrich Schlegel remarked once that to be praised by

Goethe is one of the surest signs of mediocrity. There is a measure of truth in this. Goethe was not generous toward his writing brothers. Toward the Austrian Grillparzer Goethe's attitude was formal, Olympian. By Heine he was merely amused. On the occasion of Heine's unique visit in Weimar, Goethe asked, "What are you doing now?" Heine replied, without his elbow in his cheek but only because he could not put it there, "I am working on a *Faust*." Goethe said: "Haven't you got anything else to do?" Toward Kleist, the greatest poet Prussia ever produced and the second greatest dramatist united Germany ever produced, Goethe was gruff, unkind, forbidding. It was his greatest literary mistake. But toward Schiller, during the last eleven years of the dramatist's life, Goethe was all that one man could be to another, with his noble friend's wife refusing to acknowledge his own *mâtresse*.

There is not an iota of use to list all the first aids each gave the other. When Schiller moved Goethe to finish *Faust*, or when Goethe gave Schiller the theme of *Wilhelm Tell*, it was merely in passing; it was a part of the day's work. Nor does it further the cause to repeat for the n'th time that Schiller was a philosophic-objective-idealist where Goethe was a practical-subjective-realist. The more pertinent and important point is this: Schiller realized, and expressed his realization in virtually every paragraph he wrote, that this world is founded on a dual basis: no hill, no valley; no life, no death; no man, no woman; no rich, no poor; and above all things else, no evil, no good. You said to Schiller *Ernst ist das Leben*. Schiller replied, *Ja, aber heiter ist die Kunst*. This was essentially the idea that he gave Goethe. In *Werthers Leiden* (1774) it is pre-

dominantly all love; in *Faust Ein Fragment* (1790) it is predominantly all evil; if good exists at all it has no chance. But after Schiller swam into Goethe's ken, the latter's works are framed around a dual base: witness the charming wedding of Hermann and Dorothea as the direct result of the hated French Revolution; Faust winged to heaven because of his victory over evil; and even Wilhelm Meister (1796) finding a haven and a goal after years of floundering around in the fogs of unstable determinations. John G. Robertson says that Goethe did not write so well after coming into terms of intimacy with Schiller. He wrote better, except where Schiller gave him so much to think about that he dictated. Moreover, Eduard Engel is probably entirely correct when he says that had Schiller lived he would never have allowed Goethe to write *Pandora* in so corrupt a style.

And, finally, we come to the greatest moments in Goethe's life in so far as these are supposed to reveal his character, his personality, his gifts. Toward the end of June 1823 he returned for the third time to Marienbad, remaining, except for brief stays at Karlsbad, until September. At Marienbad he was thrown into daily contact with Frau von Levetzow and her daughters. The charming Ulrike, nineteen years of age, captured his eye, captivated his heart, and he capitulated. He even thought of marrying the young girl; her mother objected, partly because he did not think of marrying her instead of the daughter. Let us eliminate the mother motif; it introduces an element of the incongruous.

The details of the case need not detain us. The grand fact is this: Seeing that his love for Ulrike was in vain

(if not vain), he wrote out of the fullness of his heart and with a speedy pen, in Latin letters on near-rag paper, the poem that has come to be known as the *Marienbader Elegie*. It is the greatest love poem ever written by a man of Goethe's age, and there is not a syllable in it about "glands." It cannot be translated, but it should be included in the appendix of every text and treatise on *Gestalt* psychology. There are twenty-three strophes of six verses each with a very simple rhyme scheme: a-b, a-b, c-c. There are isolated snips of everyday writing, such as "Du hast gut reden," and "Ich wüsst' es nicht zu sagen." But what a poetization of the major features of this major poet: Ability to see beauty and feel love even after having hurdled three-score-years-and-ten; the significance and place of loveliness in life; the majestic notion that a place is made by memories; that renunciation and resignation are the fate of those who are poets; that sorrow is merely the memory of better days but being this it is sorrow; that the world can be made to seem a flat and hollow thing to him to whom it has just been a paradise by the mere removal of love!

It is to this poem that Goethe, wholly unlike himself when writing his thousand other poems, prefixed a special exegesis:

*Und wenn der Mensch in seiner Qual verstummt,
Gab mir ein Gott zu sagen was ich leide.*

Curiosity at once idle and industrious drove the writer to various lives of Goethe to see which strophes of this elegy they quoted; and each one quotes a different one. That is quite natural; for each of the twenty-three strophes

is quotable; but Goethe himself has adumbrated the esoteric significance of elegy in the two lines above quoted.

Marienbad was his second Wetzlar. When he wrote *Werther* he was twenty-five and brusquely said that he was writing the story to get certain things off his mind. When he wrote the *Elegie* he was seventy-five and told us in splendid poetry that the *Elegie* depicted the misfortune of being a poet. *Werther* was timely; if read at all to-day it is read for the picture it gives of eighteenth century emotionalism and pessimism. The *Elegie* is timeless and when read to-day it furnishes the reader with the psychology of the human heart under stress and strain; the human heart when exposed to the contagions of love, truth, and beauty. Theories of psychology change; *das Ding an sich* never; for the human heart works now as in 1823 and is the same the world over. The human heart is what makes the study of comparative literature a reasonable enterprise. If Marienbad was not the greatest moment in Goethe's life it was the most significant; Ulrike died in 1899.

These are the greatest moments in Goethe's life, though he had others that could be called positively great, as when he read Spinoza for the first time, or met the Humboldts, or came to be a grandfather, or had Karl August place a palatial home with thirty-odd rooms at his unmortgaged disposal (1792), or became interested so much in Catholicism that, a little more, and he might have become another romantic convert, or when he became financially interested in the metal mines of South America, or—and this is really important—when he came into the charmed circle of Marianne von Willemer and Oriental poetry and

embarked on that superb venture, the writing of the *Western-Eastern Anthology*. But these are after all small in comparison.

His greatest misfortune was his inability to meet, quite early in life, some scientist of the Alexander Humboldt type who could have done for him in science what Herder did for him in letters. But Goethe the scientist was destined, it was partly his own fault, to tread the winepress alone, and without either a knowledge of mathematics or the innate ability to grasp mathematics. Yet he tried to route Sir Isaac Newton!

There is, too, the other side of the shield. It was a great moment in his life when Carlyle came to know him and make him known to English language peoples. But this is another's story. And there is the greatest moment of *all*, his life, from the angle of achievement: February 22, 1831. On that day, having pyramided his life to completion, he was able to write in his diary, apropos of *Faust*: The big job is done.

GOETHE AND FAUST

By GEORGE SANTAYANA

GOETHE WAS the wisest of mankind; too wise, perhaps, to be a philosopher in the technical sense, or to try to harness this wild world in a brain-spun terminology. It is true that he was all his life a follower of Spinoza, and that he may be termed, without hesitation, a naturalist in philosophy and a pantheist. His adherence to the general attitude of Spinoza, however, did not exclude a great plasticity and freedom in his own views, even on the most fundamental points. Thus Goethe did not admit the mechanical interpretation of nature advocated by Spinoza. He also assigned, at least to privileged souls, like his own, a more personal sort of immortality than Spinoza allowed. Moreover, he harboured a generous sympathy with the dramatic explanations of nature and history current in the Germany of his day. Yet such transcendental idealism, making the world the expression of a spiritual endeavour, was a total reversal of that conviction, so profound in Spinoza, that all moral energies are resident in particular creatures, themselves sparks in an absolutely infinite and purposeless world. In a word, Goethe was not a systematic philosopher. His feeling for the march of things and for the significance of great personages and great ideas was indeed philosophical, although more romantic than scientific. His thoughts upon life were fresh

and miscellaneous. They voiced the genius and learning of his age. They did not express a firm personal attitude, radical and unified, and transmissible to other times and persons. For philosophers, after all, have this advantage over men of letters, that their minds, being more organic, can more easily propagate themselves. They scatter less influence, but more seeds.

Goethe is a romantic poet; he is a novelist in verse. He is a philosopher of experience as it comes to the individual; the philosopher of life, as action, memory, or soliloquy may put life before each of us in turn. Now the zest of romanticism consists in taking what you know is an independent and ancient world as if it were material for your private emotions. The savage or the animal who should not be aware of nature or history at all, could not be romantic about them, nor about himself. He would be blandly idiotic, and take everything quite unsuspectingly for what it was to him. The romanticist, then, should be a civilized man, so that his primitiveness and egotism may have something paradoxical and conscious about them; and so that his life may contain a rich experience, and his reflection may play with all varieties of sentiment and thought. At the same time, in his inmost genius, he should be a barbarian, a child, a transcendentalist, so that his life may seem to him absolutely fresh, self-determined, unforeseen, and unforeseeable. It is part of his inspiration to believe that he creates a new heaven and a new earth with each revolution in his moods or in his purposes. He ignores, or seeks to ignore, all the conditions of life, until perhaps by living he personally dis-

covers them. Like Faust, he flouts science, and is minded to make trial of magic, which renders a man's will master of the universe in which he seems to live. He disowns all authority, save that mysteriously exercised over him by his deep faith in himself. He is always honest and brave; but he is always different, and absolves himself from his past as soon as he has outgrown or forgotten it. He is inclined to be wayward and foolhardy, justifying himself on the ground that all experience is interesting, that the springs of it are inexhaustible and always pure, and that the future of his soul is infinite. In the romantic hero the civilized man and the barbarian must be combined; he should be the heir to all civilization, and, nevertheless, he should take life arrogantly and egotistically, as if it were an absolute personal experiment.

The literary merits of Goethe's *Faust* correspond accurately with its philosophical excellences. In the prologue in the theatre Goethe himself has described them; much scenery, much wisdom, some folly, great wealth of incident and characterization; and behind, the soul of a poet singing with all sincerity and fervour the visions of his life. Here is profundity, inwardness, honesty, waywardness; here are the most touching accents of nature, and the most varied assortment of curious lore and grotesque fancies. This work, says Goethe (in a quatrain intended as an epilogue, but not ultimately inserted in the play)—this work is like human life: it has a beginning it has an end; but it has no totality, it is not one whole. How, indeed, should we draw the sum of an infinite experience that is without conditions to determine it, and

without goals in which it terminates? Evidently all a poet of pure experience can do is to represent some snatches of it, more or less prolonged; and the more prolonged the experience represented is the more it will be a collection of snatches, and the less the last part of it will have to do with the beginning. Any character which we may attribute to the whole of what we have surveyed would fail to dominate it, if that whole had been larger, and if we had had memory or foresight enough to include other parts of experience differing altogether in kind from the episodes we happen to have lived through. To be miscellaneous, to be indefinite, to be unfinished, is essential to the romantic life. May we not say that it is essential to all life, in its immediacy; and that only in reference to what is not life—to objects, ideals, and unanimities that cannot be experienced but may only be conceived—can life become rational and truly progressive? Herein we may see the radical and inalienable excellence of romanticism; its sincerity, freedom, richness, and infinity. Herein, too, we may see its limitations, in that it cannot fix or trust any of its ideals, and blindly believes the universe to be as wayward as itself, so that nature and art are always slipping through its fingers. It is obstinately empirical, and will never learn anything from experience.

THE POET GOETHE

By WALLACE B. NICHOLS

THE OUTSTANDING feature of Goethe's poetical work is its subjectivity of inspiration and its objectivity of expression. He felt individually but he expressed universally. Every single poem he wrote, as he himself said, is a fragment of a great confession, and arises directly out of reality of emotion or thought, being then sifted through the imagination; it is not a question of the imagination primarily determining the substance of each poem, and then reality endeavouring to prevent the sublime from falling into the ridiculous. "Everywhere in Goethe," a German critic remarks, "we are on safe ground." That is to say, he is a realist, not a weaver of fantasies. It is this fact which makes the record of his life the best, indeed the only, commentary upon his work; but the mistake must not be made of considering his work as less humanly interesting on that account. Goethe felt so intensely and so variously, and his style was so vivid and flexible, that his personal confessions speak not only for himself but for mankind at large; everyone can find in his poetry, as in that of Shakespeare, the voice of nature and of the world.

Goethe essayed every type of poetical composition, and achieved enduringly in all, but most supremely in the lyric. The lyrical faculty—the gift of song—never de-

serted him. His style in prose became, towards the end of his long career, flat; but he could sing to the very last; and the gift of verbal music was his to an astonishing extent. The German language, so harsh in the hands of its many Marsyases, is, in the hands of this Apollo, veritable melody itself. Shelley was not more dewy and natural, nor yet Tennyson more scrupulous in technique.

To give an adequate idea of Goethe as a lyric poet is no easy task. Not only was he a "chameleon" in temperament, as he himself acknowledged, but also a "chameleon" in style. To read to any sufficient degree his enormous output of short poems, as distinct from his dramatic or philosophic poetry, is to experience in turn as many phases of feeling as there are in life. And this without taking the tremendous variety of *Faust* into consideration at all! Lyrics of love, expressing every shade of that emotion gay and sad, epigrams, satirical pieces, nature poems, gnomic cameos, poems of passion, fancy and fact fall over each other's heels as they tumble from his pages in unexampled profusion. They seem to have surged out of his being as naturally as wheat out of a well-sown field. And it is Wordsworth—pedestrian, unlyrical Wordsworth—who has apparently fixed it indelibly in the English mind that Goethe's poetry is "not inevitable enough!" It is unkind to compare *We are Seven* with *Der Sänger*. It is kinder to compare *Tintern Abbey* with *Ilmenau*. From this latter comparison the difference between Wordsworth's attitude and Goethe's towards Nature becomes essentially apparent. Wordsworth's was instinctive and Goethe's penetrative. That is to say, Wordsworth looked at Nature as a moralist and Goethe as a scientist.

Goethe's lyrical faculty, which dominated all his work in poetry, sprang mainly, as is only natural in the case of lyric verse, from the inspiration of his numerous love affairs. In this he has marked affinity with poets such as Catullus and Burns, and he has a passionate directness of touch which he shares, except with them, with no other poets, not even with Sappho and Shelley. But he has the advantage over both the Roman and the Scottish poets in the matter of his superior intellect, his wider grasp of the world, and the greater variety of his emotional experiences. Catullus sang of but one love, but Burns of many loves; yet the love-songs of Burns are of a piece whether directed to Bonnie Jean, Nancy or the Lass o' Ballochmyle, whereas the love poems inspired by Friederike, Lili, Charlotte von Stein, Christiane, Marianne or Ulrike are, individually as well as collectively, different in character and temper and even in technique. It is possible to sense the diverse personalities of the various women whom Goethe loved through the veil of song in which he severally wrapped them. In this he is perhaps unique among poets.

From the consideration of Goethe as a lyric writer to the consideration of him as a writer of ballads is a very short step, for his ballads are but songs with a story, just as Schiller's are little dramas handled in lyrical form; and in this differentiation the opposite literary temperaments of the two poets are well contrasted.

A noteworthy point concerning Goethe's ballads is the variety of their type; *Der Sänger*, *Erlikönig*, *Die Braut von Corinth*, *Der Fischer*, *Der König in Thule*, *Der Gott und die Bajadere*, *Der Schatzgräber* are as different one

from another as they could well be, and if there is any homogeneity among them it lies in the artistic completeness of the achievement in each example. There is a much greater similarity both in type and treatment among the various ballads respectively of Schiller and Uhland, though it may be admitted that in one or two respects, notably in their being more truly narratives, the ballads of Schiller and Uhland—of Uhland in particular—more successfully represent the ballad ideal than those of Goethe; but, on the other hand, while they may be better ballads they are not so often as good poems. The poet in Goethe transcended the ballad-monger, excellent though that ballad-monger was.

In the same way the poet in him transcended the dramatist. To speak sooth, Goethe, despite the possession of a subtle dramatic sense was not a dramatist. Incidentally this goes to show that the practical experience of the stage—which, as the manager for a long term of the Weimar Theatre, he possessed—does not necessarily help a great writer to the dramatic faculty; dramatists, like poets, are born first and made afterwards. Goethe's plays do not hold the stage in the same manner as those of Shakespeare, and it is not only the most ignorant of criticism, but also the most misleading, to call Goethe the "Shakespeare of Germany," and then to belittle him because he was not a supreme dramatist. No two great poets were ever temperamentally and artistically more dissimilar than Shakespeare and Goethe, and comparison between them is about as productive as the milking of he-goats. In fact, it can never be too forcefully insisted upon that nearly all English criticism of foreign poetry is vitiated by the habit of using

Shakespeare as a landmark for purposes of aesthetic perspective. A supreme poet—and Goethe was a supreme poet, one of a very small band of brothers—is too individualistic to be fruitfully compared to any standard other than truth to nature and humanity.

It is interesting to note that in the play written more directly under the influence of Shakespeare, his first attempt at drama, *Götz von Berlichingen*, Goethe is less essentially Shakespearean than in a play so alien to the Shakespearean manner as the much later *Torquato Tasso*. Goethe assuredly—as he faithfully acknowledged—owed a good deal of his development to the study of Shakespeare, but he was never Shakespearean; he was always, from first to last, entirely Goethean, and Shakespeare was no more "imitated" by him than was Vergil by Dante. Great poets do not imitate; they develop under influential direction of certain of their predecessors. Where Goethe and Shakespeare are akin—and the foregoing reference to the play on Tasso comes here into line—is in their power of fathoming the subtlest introspections of men and women; in their power, not in their respective manifestation of that power, a point which it is essential to make for the proper understanding of the vital difference between them. Shakespeare's characters are richer in dynamic force, Goethe's in daemonic; Shakespeare's are more casual of dramatic action, Goethe's more responsive to non-dramatic motive, which is but repeating the statement that Goethe though undeniably a supreme delineator of human beings, was not a dramatist in the real meaning of the term.

In the portrayal of women, Goethe is more happy than

in the portrayal of men: his men are generally passive characters, and it is his women who are usually responsible for whatever action there may be in his plays. Upon his women he expended the whole riches of his Promethian genius. From the point of view of dramatic values the women of Shakespeare, of Euripides, even of Racine, are fuller personalities; but in inner feminine soul-life women such as Iphigenie, the Princess Leonore in *Tasso* and Eugenie in *Die Natürliche Tochter*, have no strict parallels in dramatic poetry. The Gretchen of *Faust* stands somewhat apart, as she is more dramatically conceived, her place being nearer to the Ophelias and the Desdemonas. But in Iphigenie, Leonore and Eugenie, Goethe has created both individuals and types; they are women, and yet they are also woman. It is impossible to overpraise the subtle intensity of characterization in portraits such as these. Entirely un-Shakespearean as they are, the same depth of insight, and the same sovereignty of handling, went to their making as went to the making of Cordelia and Imogen, and not less heavenly is the result.

At the same time the men in Goethean drama, despite their passivity as protagonists, are authentically real human beings, and their emotions and sensitivenesses are psychologically, almost pathologically, studied and reproduced. To give one instance, the feverish madness of Orestes in *Iphigenie in Tauris* is as impressive and as true to nature as any of the similar passages in Æschylus and Sophocles. And to give another instance, it may be doubted whether the man of affairs in contrast with the imaginative man has ever had a more subtle portrayal

than in the character of Antonio Montecatino in *Torquato Tasso*.

For Goethe's principal contributions to masculine portraiture, however, one has to turn to Faust. Faust and Mephistopheles are characters which have caught the imagination of mankind; they share the immortality of Don Quixote, Harpagon, Falstaff, Lear and Oedipus—they are hung in the gallery of all time. Of the two, perhaps Mephistopheles has impressed himself the more upon the world's mind; he is the most devilish devil in literature. The Satan of Dante is more bestial; the Lucifer of Milton is more rebellious—so magnificently rebellious, indeed, that he is a hero, almost a Prometheus, for Milton invested him with something of his own grandeur—but neither is so eminently “the spirit who denies,” the sinner against the light. Such a spirit and such a sinner Mephistopheles is to perfection, if the term perfection can be applied to what is radically evil. The nearest parallel is Iago, but Iago is the “Italianate devil,” who would circumvent Othello, while Mephistopheles is the devil who “would circumvent God” rather than Faust. Mephistopheles has no personal enmity against Faust; the Doctor is God's servant, and that is sufficient. Faust himself may be described as a Byronic Hamlet, but the simplicity of this interpretation is made complex by the constant intrusion of the creator in his creation, and Goethe was neither a Byron nor a Hamlet. Faust is, in truth—especially when his rôle in the Second Part is also taken into consideration—a figure who is both human and symbolic, and the two masks are donned and doffed, in the first Part as well as in the Second, with bewildering sleight of hand. He is a problem

as Hamlet is a problem, but the solution of Hamlet's problem lies in the elucidation of man, and the solution of Faust's in the elucidation of God.

Two minor characters in *Faust*, Wagner and Martha, are etched with as consummate a skill as any "character part" of Shakespeare or Molière, and, slight though the sketches are, the strength of hand, "the lion's paw," is there shown in sovereign degree. And who may criticize Gretchen. Who may probe the heart of a rose and not find it wither in the hand? The most famous of all her creator's daughters, she is one of the most poignant and unforgettable figures in the world's poetry. Her appeal is universal, her tragedy immortally human, and the magic of her making a miracle of insight and plastic power. As the final remark upon Goethe as a dramatist, it may be said that no passage in any dramatic poet excels, in every quality of great drama, the scene of Gretchen's death at the end of the First Part of *Faust*. Goethe never wrote a satisfactory play, but—perhaps by an accident of genius—he wrote the most satisfying single scene that a dramatic poet has ever written.

There remains to be considered the style of Goethe. Behind the magic of all great art is its own secret, and it is generally a matter of style; and style, especially in poetry, is as indefinable as a perfume; it can be appreciated, but not comprehended.

Development of literary manner in a poet, and the later maturity, may be at odds and yet at one; there may be many manifestations of diverse experiments, but there is usually a dominant characteristic common to the whole output. With Goethe the dominant characteristic—and it

is that which is the keynote to a man's style or even, as in Goethe's case, his several styles—is the transmutation of the Gothic ideal into the Greek. Yet to say that Goethe developed into a true Greek is to make a mistake; he became a Greek after a fashion, a Greek who was not quite classical. It is this fusion—and it is an harmonious fusion—of the Gothic ideal and the Greek which is not only the theme of the *Helene* interlude in *Faust* but also the essential charm underlying the blank verse of the *Iphigenie in Tauris*. But to analyze is not to explain, nor would even an explanation do more than merely re-affirm the magic. Goethe has a magic or magic such as very few poets have approached and none outdistanced. It is not, as was to some extent Shakespeare's, one of verbal efflorescence; nor, as Virgil's, one of what might be called atmospheric timbre of voice; nor yet, as Dante's one of bronze concision. It is a magic of inner glow, with certain affinities with the magic that so peculiarly belongs to Sophocles. It is also, especially in his lyrics, akin to the magic of a rippling mountain-brook on a spring morning.

For a poet of Goethe's temperament the technical art of verse can never have been a negligible matter. As he said to Eckermann, there is not a single page in his writings but he knew exactly how it came. The poet and the artist were complementary to each other, and neither can be properly estimated without reference to the other. One example will suffice to show the minuteness of care he took to satisfy his own ear. In the *Marienbader Elegie*—the line:

Wohl Kräuter gäb's, des Körpers Qual zu stillen

had three predecessors:

*Wohl gäb's ein Kraut des Körpers Qual zu stillen
Wohl gäb es Kräuter, Körpers Qual zu stillen
Wohl Kräuter gäb's die Körperqual zu stillen.*

It will be gathered that—despite an early mastery of what has since come to be known as *vers libre*—Goethe has no affinity with those who would impose a Soviet upon Parnassus, with those against whom Sir William Watson fulminates in the lines:

*Think you 'tis thus, in uncouth contortion,
That Song lives throned above thrones that fall?
Her handmaids are order and just proportion,
And measure and grace, that survive you all.*

Order, just proportion, measure and grace were always the presiding Muses in Goethe's most characteristic poetry, in his lyrics without exception. When upon occasion, like Homer, he nodded, it was not in a lyric.

A thing of beauty can never be a thing of ugliness, and it is the beautiful things of the world that are the destroyers of the ugly things. We are not healed of life by our thoughts, but by the vision of beauty which is in us, and which helps us to look out upon the world beautifully and to apprehend it as a spiritual thing and not a material thing. For this revelation we have to go to the poets; and the poets have taught us more by way of revelation than by way of instruction. Let us not seek to have expounded to us the "gospel" of Goethe. Do we seek profitably to have expounded to us the "gospels" of Homer or Shake-

peare? Let us seek after the revelation of Goethe, and we shall find it deepest in his poetry, not in his novels or other prose writings. And from the readings of that poetry we shall obtain the same revelation of eternal beauty as we obtain from the contemplation of the marbles of Phidias.

GOETHE'S VIEWS ON ART

By H. A. KORFF

I

It is but a specific expression of Goethe's universality, that even in his artistic activities he appears an encompassing colossus, and, because of a twofold endowment, belongs to those majestic ranks in which we see the painter-poets Gessner, Müller, Stifter, Keller, and the poet-musicians, Ludwig and Wagner. Even, I observe, in his artistic activities. For his existence was complete, not only as artist, but also as scientist and practical statesman; he was able to manifest a thoroughly integrated and open-minded personality—to experience, as Faust says, in his inner self the potentialities of all mankind. Such is the common framework in which we are accustomed to place every modern picture of Goethe.

A great number of exhibitions and publications of Goethe's drawings constantly bring to our attention how powerfully his leaning to the plastic arts was tied up with his whole existence, and what it must have cost him to renounce their execution. It was while in Italy that he, the creator of *Goetz* and *Werther*, of *Faust* and *Iphigenie*, perceived that he apparently "was born to be a poet." "Out of my recent domicile in Rome I conclude that I shall renounce the exercise of sculpture." But it was only

twenty years later that he ventured a complete abandonment. We could draw from his own words written in Rome, even if it were not plainly present in *Wilhelm Meister*, that his intense feelings toward art tore his life with the peculiar inner problems they created. He writes: "Since my youth I have been ill with this disease [his conflicts], and I beg God that it one day disentangle itself from me." Perhaps it actually did become disentangled. Perhaps Goethe possessed the power to give his suffering another form, so that, in the perennial duties as art-collector and dilettante, he found some slight measure of compensation for the artist's dream buried in Italy. The range of this collector's activity was enormous: only those can truly grasp its extent who have with their own eyes beheld its products in the treasures of the Goethe-house in Weimar. Still more of the indefatigable zeal for plastic art is perceivable in the stately volumes of the Goethean essays on art, first brought together in little pamphlets, later in Wieland's *Deutscher Merkur*, but especially in Goethe's own art journals. Here we have not only the final yield of his untiring studies, but, indirectly, proof of that activity whereby he sought to enter the contemporary art-life, an ingress not immediately conceded him.

Still, it hardly needs this desultory summary to awaken in one's memory Goethe's sympathy with the arts. It might, indeed, appear more feasible to consider in what sense his well-known activities merit to become the subject of a dissertation. Shall we postulate the question: What does Goethe mean to art? Or, shall we reverse it and inquire: What is the significance of art to Goethe? If we predicate the first question, we must infer from the hypoth-

esis that for plastic art and its history, for appreciation and aesthetics, Goethe possessed high significance. But Goethe acquired no such significance. That his drawings meant very little in graphic art cannot be denied. The collection in the Goethe National Museum is in no way an accumulation of great artistic worth. For Goethe it served symbolically to illustrate the history of art. It consists essentially of reproductions of distant originals. What appeared to Goethe as true treasures have for us lost their worth. More difficult is the question: What attitude shall we assume toward Goethe's understanding of art, his appreciation of art in general, of the monuments of definite past eras—the ancient world, the middle ages, the Renaissance—especially of the painting of his own times and its deficiencies? If we begin first with the latter question and observe Goethe's artistic taste in the intricate nexus of nineteenth century art history, the great poet appears throughout as a doctrinaire unacquainted with art, to whom living art passed in every respect simply as the order of the day. If we inquire concerning the value of his insights into the art of the Renaissance or of antiquity, we shall find that on the one hand these fall completely into the critical grooves hewed by Winckelmann, and are therefore not actually original; but on the other hand, they fall into the sphere of criticism which modern knowledge has itself applied to judge Winckelmann. Antiquity can no longer be understood in the sense that Goethe and Winckelmann saw and understood it. The *Laocoön*, before which the eighteenth century lay prostrate, worshipping, is to the present nothing but a stereotyped virtuosity of Greek decadence.

There still remains to be considered Goethe's insight into the nature of plastic art. It so happened that in 1894 Harnack, the most reputable of the interpreters of Goethe's artistic views, wished to speak of the significance of these views for contemporary times; he wished, further, to present the period with some semblance of artistic order in the name of Goethe's theories. He was confronted with an utter lack of appreciation not only of the historical situation, but also of the true value of Goethe's outlook on art. For these views possess on the surface a very trifling merit. One begins to perceive their value once he observes them quite casually and without reference to the established prejudices of art history. This is to say that Goethe entertained aesthetic views of high consequence; but he lacked contact with an environment of artistic creativeness, and could not, therefore, apply these views to the substance of art history. The ideas were built at a time which must be counted one of total sterility and degeneracy. And indeed, they were in opposition to the spirit of the day. He produced them not out of a spirit of dynamic creativeness, but rather out of the spirit of a very noble, but none the less doctrinaire erudition. In any case, although Goethe's theoretical ideas lead to the profoundest thoughts on art, they do not approach any of its individual problems in the contemporary artistic *milieu*. We must consequently admit that for plastic art, its history, and its attainments, Goethe has actually no overwhelming importance.

Another question: In the integration of Goethe's spiritual organism, in the cohesion of his character, and as a fundamental element in his poetry, what is the import of

this sympathetic interest in plastic art and in the great monuments of the past, with which his soul was united? I shall seek to answer this query in reversed order: first, concerning the importance of monuments of artistic epochs; secondly, the significance of plastic art generally. And when one looks over that subject in its great ramifications, it becomes evident even to the superficial student that we are here dealing with two, at most with three, question-clusters. Let us name them: Goethe and Gothic architecture; Goethe and classic art; and also perhaps, Goethe and old-German painting. This last has no longer any positive intrinsic significance. The path which our thoughts must take is therefore traced. It is based upon the familiar conception that Goethe's relation to plastic art was conditioned by a sudden cataclysmic revolution in taste and sentiment, consummated in his digression from his original enthusiasm for the Gothic, and the ever stronger leaning toward a so-called classical art. And above all things it is necessary to understand this change of conviction.

II

Goethe's first love was not Gothic architecture. Even a swift change of heart, so that under the influence of Herder he withdrew from his period and his youth in his appreciation of classical rococo—even this does not indicate his earliest preference. And, as we shall see, we are concerned more with a protest against the precepts of rococo than with a true subjugation by that temper which we today call the Gothic. At least, so we must judge, if we press into service the well-known little script which Goethe published under the title *Of German Architecture*. This

essay is constructed out of two basic ideas, which constitute the full credo of the *Sturm Und Drang* aesthetic: there are many beauties, and every beauty grows up in its own distinctive earth, has its distinctive individual conditions. This thought, which to us is so obvious, was no such self-evident postulate in the period of classical rococo, when a definitive language of form became a dogma of self-blessedness—an explicit language which stemmed from the Renaissance and the rediscovered antiquity, and was strengthened by French style. This terminology was based on what is known as “good taste” with its adoration of “harmonious masses,” “pure form,” and its scorn of the “intricate caprice of Gothic decoration.” For as Goethe himself observes: “Under the name Gothic was understood everything which did not pass in this system and which might make the impression on the well-educated adept of vacillation, disorder, botchery, overdecoration.” This was the atmosphere in which the young Leipzig student was developed by his instructor Oeser (a friend of Winckelmann).

Goethe once encountered this experience. The Strassburg Cathedral, proclaimed as Gothic, is unquestionably beautiful—exquisite even though, according to the teachings of the time, it showed nothing which belonged to the absolute signs of architectural beauty. Above all; no pillars! A monument of a great architecture without pillars!

There are, doubtless, various forms of beauty. And these distinctive beauties have natural conditions. And insofar as Goethe sought to find these conditions, he did exactly what Herder did in his Shakespearean writings. These writings appeared together with Goethe's *Erwinauf-*

satz in the pages of *German Arts and Literature*. As Herder explained the differences of Greek tragedy and Shakespearean drama by reference to the varying historical conditions, so Goethe explained the variations between the Greek temple and the German dome by reference to the different climatic conditions. As, in the warm south, edifices are supported by open rows of pillars, so, in the cold north, the sanctuaries originate out of enclosed structures. The problem of the southern architect was consequently to fashion works of art out of orders of columns; the problem of the northern architect, however, lay in the artistic creation of great planes. And this is the architectural problem which ingeniously redeemed the Gothic, according to Goethe's interpretation: the transformation, through buttresses and decorative effects, of a monotonous impression of monstrous buildings, into a bearable, even aesthetic, sensation.

Now one may well suggest that what Goethe experienced was not entirely the bad dynamics of line, or the spiritualization of masses struggling upward, but a ruling harmony and order which persisted despite everything. To his great wonder and astonishment, he discovered in this mass of stone—arbitrarily and barbarously discredited—precisely that spirit of harmony and artistry which had eluded him from the time of the classic rococo. It is Erwin's deed, according to Goethe, that he succeeded in creating, out of necessity, a virtue, and out of poverty, beauty. He says it explicitly. And we cannot doubt, for we hear him admiring the Cathedral. "How brightly it gleams in the morning haze; with what joy I could extend my arms toward it, view the mighty harmonious masses, animated

down to countless little details, to the tiniest fibrile, as in a work of eternal nature. Everything form, and everything cohering in one unity."

But to accompany this first thought, another emerged. The Strassburg Cathedral is a thing of beauty. Within it are embodied the laws of harmony. But were it decreed that this be not so, the Cathedral would not cease to be a great work of art. For—and here first appears the inner revolution—*beauty is by no means the only symbol of genuine art*. Goethe says—it is a spiritual moment of the first order—"They would have you believe that beautiful art originates out of the propensity which we should have to beautify a thing on all sides. This is not true. Art is a long time building before it becomes beautiful, and as for truly great art, it is frequently truer and greater than beauty itself. For men have a creative nature, which shows its industry once his existence is assured. As soon as he need not worry and fear, this demi-god (man) seizes effectually during his leisure upon stuffs into which to breathe his soul. Thus, with his adventurous impulses, the savage models horrid creatures, and paints his plumes and his body in brilliant colors. And let this work consist of the most spontaneous designs, it will nevertheless cohere without any relationship of forms, for an emotion has called into being a characteristic whole. Characteristic art is the only true art. If it affects an inner, unified, individual, independent feeling, untroubled, indeed unaware of everything foreign to itself, then, be it born of uncultured savagery or of refined sensitivity, then it is whole and living!"

Beauty, Goethe further continues, is but a *unique acci-*

dent of art, whose domains are far wider than the domains of beauty. But beautiful art does not spring into being—and now comes the blow against the imitative spirit of modern classicism—out of a disregard of the art of antiquity (while a derivative use is made of its principles). The highest beauty originates only from within; beauty becomes an experience of the artist, and so transforms his being that any natural expression of his nature partakes thereafter of the character of this beauty. This accident is truly, the young Goethe is convinced, a summit of art. It is then expressive art and beautiful art at the same time: such was the art of Erwin von Steinbach who created the Cathedral. Goethe notes: "The more this beauty penetrates into the substance of the soul—so that both appear to have originated together, so that nothing but the other is sufficient for the one, so that the spirit affects nothing without its companion—the more fortunate is the artist, the more noble is he, the more deeply moved do we, heads bowed, pray to the anointed of God. And no one will hurl Erwin down the stair which he has climbed. Here is his work; go and recognize the profoundest feeling of truth and beauty, affected by a strong, primitive, German soul." Here is precipitated Goethe's interpretation of two words, now definitely differentiated: *truth* and *beauty*. His basic conviction cannot from now on be shattered. In art, truth is possible without beauty, but without truth, there can be no beauty. An art which is not a true expression of a true soul, is no true art but only a pseudo art—even though it gather its beauty from all the corners of the world and from all the eras of history. Its primary condition is character. Characteristic art is therefore indeed

the only true art. True beauty is also characteristic art. Loveliness can be only the charm of character, but never the attraction of fickleness. Goethe recognized such characterless beauty in the antique rococo of the Strassburg Cathedral. Over this work he discharged his scorn with full venom. And as an expression of the naked German soul he recognized only the Gothic, which, even as every other form, may be refined to the highest beauty.

And shall be! For on the first step of his analysis it was already clear to the young Goethe, that art, just as it must always be characteristic, must always spring from the spirit. Under no circumstances must it remain the expression of a coarse, inharmonious, vulgar soul. The expression of the soul, if this is to be the problem, must be the expression of a soul fair to see.

So ends the Goethean hymn, with a eulogy to the true artist, who would be born of nature, with a keen eye for relationships, who would storm through life passionately, and would be finally matured for the delicate emotions of true beauty. "Harbour him, heavenly beauty, mediator between gods and men, and more than Prometheus, he will direct the blessedness of the gods to the earth!" He thus closes with a prophetic presentiment of his own artistic development, which was grounded in characteristic art.

If we glance over the conclusions, we find that Goethe first discovered at the Strassburg Cathedral the artistic worth of originality which is not dependent upon every so-called beauty-value. Secondly, he discovered the possibility of beauty in every peculiarity of form: it needed only to be harmoniously built, in order to manifest attrac-

tiveness. He unfolded the fundamental principles of his assembled views on art, and to these he adhered for the rest of his life.

III

With this we are ready for the second great question: What was the significance of classic art to Goethe? Under the term *classic art* we shall comprehend: antiquity, the art of the Renaissance (which derived from antiquity), the Italian High Renaissance above all. This question divides again into two. We must differentiate between Goethe's relationship to classical architecture and his relationship to the imitative plastic arts, paintings and sculpture. If, in the artistic life of his youth, architecture by some chance became the motivating theme, in his maturity it was entirely painting united with sculpture. Except for the momentary infatuation with Palladio, master of the late Italian Renaissance, whose classic monuments Goethe first became acquainted with in Pienza, classical architecture played but a trifling rôle in his life. We possess no such eulogy of the Greek Temple or the Italian dome and palace as of the Strassburg Cathedral. Lest, however, it seem to follow from this that classical architecture presented no problem to Goethe, let it be said that it only assumed an unusual expression. Goethe encountered here precisely the language of form which corresponded to his fancy, and which, artistically, completely freed him. He did not actually learn something new, as he did at the Strassburg Cathedral, but simply found substantiation for his views, without systematically meditating upon them.

We may therefore confine ourselves to the second prob-

lem, Goethe's attitude toward the imitative arts, sculpture and painting. That these two should be bound together under the concept of "imitative" arts is implicit in Goethe's relation to art generally. Sculpture and painting cannot be severed in Goethe's aesthetics. He conceived them as two individual modes of the same art, in which painting presents in two dimensions what sculpture constructs in three. It is therefore entirely explicable that he appeared to love especially the intermediate form between painting and sculpture: relief, as in the Greek vases and frescoes. He looks upon painting completely with the eye of a sculptor, or at least with the eye of a draughtsman. And so it is of little moment to him whether he speaks of sculpture or of painting. In his many writings on the theory of art, both are interchangeably linked.

Sculpture and painting may in a profounder sense be considered together as the imitative arts. For Goethe's whole philosophy of art revolves about the problem of imitation. It evolves out of reflection on the relation of art to nature—a relation which, in this sense, exists only for the imitative arts, wherein nature becomes somehow reconstructed. Let me remark that Goethe had already dealt with the problem of imitation. But he was here confronted not with an artistic simulation of nature, but with an artistic imitation of art—as in classical degenerate art. How work out this idea together with the premise that every true art must be an expression of the spirit? The problem of imitation acquires a peculiarly new meaning, one which without more ado reconciles imitation with the requirements of subjective truth. Art has its very essence embodied in imitation, imitation of nature. It is inconceiv-

able how art may be an expression of the soul, if at the same time it be not an expression or impression of nature.

The whole theory of nature imitation was false. It was without meaning. "The reproduction of the world occurs through my inner world, which packs and ties everything, creates anew, and again brings forth in an original form and manner." This indicates that not only is the temperament the integrating organ of artistic representation; the whole inner world of the artist is involved, his life, his spirit, his consciousness. A first class work of art is, therefore, intrinsically no objective, but a subjective reproduction of nature—a union of nature and artist, *a rebirth of nature out of the spirit of a creator*. And, just as only a subjective creation shall be given life, so, according to a dictum of the young Goethe, the artist shall represent only that which he loves. "You find Rubens' women too fat," he says. "I tell you, they were his women, and had he populated instead heaven and hell, earth and sea with ideal women, he would have been a poor husband, and no glorious flesh would have resulted from his flesh, nor bone of his bone." It is not *the* nature, which the artist pictures, but *his* nature. "A great painter such as Rubens toys with all the sensitive emotions of the observer, and leads him to believe that he is transferred to the date of the pictured story: this is accomplished by the technique, the emotions of the painter."

Nothing is like plastic art a pure embodiment of the principles of form, in contradistinction to the temporal principle of life. Nothing is so majestic. This holds only with a restriction, but surely with a restriction which Goethe's whole relation to plastic art at once floods with

a purifying glimmer. For it is true, in fact, only of the classical style of plastic art. Only the classic attains that highest summit of form, which held Goethe in the final line of his artistic strivings. In pure form he sought release from eternal change, and in the classical he found its deepest manifestation.

Translated by Maxwell Lehman.

GOETHE AND THE FAR EAST

By ERICH JENISCH

I

GOETHE'S RELATIONSHIP to both culture cycles of the Far East, the Indian and the Chinese, shall not only be factually portrayed in this essay but, still more important, an attempt shall also be made to educe from this relationship the operation of a vital principle. In spite of the fact that he believed that he could comprehend life only in the "fruitful moment," Goethe was nevertheless conscious of an inner relationship among all vital phenomena, of a clearly-defined unity in life as a whole. It shall be shown that the distant East was no strange world to Goethe, that he found in these lands "responsive images" of his being, and that they formed an element of his world only when he saw such personal correspondences. When he found no such accord, then "Chinese, Indian, and Egyptian antiquity were curiosities only. It is very well to inform oneself and the world of them; but for moral and aesthetic education they will avail us little."

II

Since the end of the eighteenth century, the literary works of India have become known to Europe through the mediation of England. Goethe took an active interest in the

expanding field of Indology. Indian philosophy was known to Goethe only superficially. Not until after his death did Indology turn to research in the Vedas. (Rosen began his publication of the Rig-Veda in 1838.) Goethe knew almost all the significant publications of his time concerning India and his particular attitude cannot therefore be based upon a biased or false orientation.

It is known that Goethe very decisively rejected wide fields of Indian art. He felt a particularly strong repulsion for Indian plastic art. In the *Zahmen Xenien* there is many a line which expresses the following:

*Nicht jeder kann alles ertragen:
Der weicht diesem, der jenem aus;
Warum soll ich nicht sagen:
Die indischen Götzen, die sind mir ein Graus?*

The *Westöstlicher Divan* contains no Indian elements. But Goethe's antipathy for the Indian spirit emerges clearly enough. He renounces it for "the insufficiencies of a peculiar disposition and an unfortunate religion;" he even calls the Indian religion outright "insane, monstrous." The culture of the Parsees is worthy of admiration only because "the fatal proximity of Indian idolatry did not affect it," and elsewhere, in the *Noten und Abhandlungen*, one reads, "The Indian teaching is worthless from its very origin; . . . its many thousand gods only bewilder one the more; they promote the irrationality of each passion and uphold the madness of blasphemy as the highest stage of sanctity and beatitude."

To explain this rejection by means of Goethe's classical taste, as is commonly done, is insufficient. Goethe was not

at all an orthodox Hellenist in the sense that there could be for him no salvation outside of classical antiquity. He himself rather emphatically denounces the custom of regarding oriental cultures from the perspective of the ancients. "When the admirable Mr. Jones," he writes in the *Divan* Notes, "compares the oriental poets with the Latins and Greeks, he has his reasons: his relationship to England and its classical critics obliges him to do so. He himself, reared in the strict classical school, probably understood the exclusive prejudice which would consider nothing of any import except that which we have inherited from Rome or Athens . . . We know how to evaluate the poetical style of the orientals, we grant them the greatest spiritual merits, but we should compare them with themselves, we should honor them in their own sphere and forget that there ever were Greeks and Romans." One will therefore have to seek the reasons for Goethe's repudiation of Indian religion and religious plastic art in profounder, more essential levels of his personality rather than in a superficial, one-sided direction of classical taste.

Goethe once expressed himself thus to Wilhelm von Humboldt: "I am by no means ill-disposed towards Indian culture, but I am afraid of it, for it draws my imagination into formlessness and deformity against which I must guard myself more than ever." It is thus the characteristic formlessness of Indian art that repels Goethe above all. To-day, when excellent replicas of Indian works of art are at our disposal and we can even see originals in our museums, it is impossible for us to deny India's art aesthetic merit. Rather do we sense the pregnancy of artistic expression as being particularly strong in it. But Goethe's

sane temperament could no more have let itself be enchanted by the artistic perfection of these works than by those of romantic art. He also felt, in the crude pointed allusions which he found in Sonnerat's translations, that India's art was characterized by a low quality of artistic form and, above all, that the philosophy which it embodied was opposed to his own.

It is a very notable characteristic of Goethe that he was capable of "seeing ideas with his eyes." Nature seems to him the expression of the extreme forces of life, as the representation, but not the work of God. The expression "God-nature" thus attains a symbolic analogy. In the environment of nature he found it possible to become intuitively aware of the highest spiritual concepts: for him the form of art coincided essentially with the form of nature. This unity, this identification with actual things he missed in Indian works of art. The many-armed and many-headed statues were creations of a fancy which no longer confided itself to existent reality; they exceeded the measure of the natural and organic. These works were the portrayal of an imaginative conception rather than of a real perception. Goethe could find no image in all of nature which corresponded to these forms of art. And for the very reason that the natural appeared to him as the divine, the Indian idols must have affected him literally as sacrilegious blasphemy against God.

*Nehme sie niemand zum Exempel,
Die Elefanten—und Fratzentempel!
Mit heiligen Grillen trieben sie Spott,
Man fühlt weder Natur noch Gott.*

The last line of this stanza definitely shows how clearly Goethe was conscious of the gulf which separated him from India's art.

And for yet another reason Goethe was obliged to reject the mythological plastic art of India. Besides its unnaturalness and formlessness, the inhumanness of its idols repels him particularly.

Goethe's religiousness is not a striving for transcendental concepts. He who could see ideas with his eyes was also impelled to be able to see the highest of all ideas. Nature was to him the body of God just as God was the soul of nature. He therefore becomes the enemy of all religious anthropomorphism. The concept of God as a human being he did not know, and with that he also lacked the possibility of creating an image of God.

It is comprehensible that Goethe, feeling thus about God and man, found his requirements for idols fulfilled in the statues of the ancients. Here he beheld the form of nature gently exalted beyond the human, nearing a superhuman perfection and transfiguration without disturbing thereby the humanness of the form. And he beheld the beauty of these creations which were to him neither an empty canon, nor mere sensual titillation, but "the manifestation of occult natural laws which would remain eternally hidden from us without their appearance." The polymorphous idols of India, human bodies with the heads of elephants and the limbs of serpents, could not afford him a glimpse of such divinely-beautiful humanity. The body was unnaturally distorted; masks and dull, stolid animal faces took the place of the noble countenance. "Let me confess," he writes to Windischgraetz about the *Ra-*

mayana and its fabulous creatures, "that we who read Homer as our breviary, who devote ourselves body and soul to Greek plastic art as the most humanly-proper embodiment of divinity, can only step into those boundless spaces with a sort of trepidation at the monstrosities that loom up against us, hover, and disappear."

III

It is the unique law of Goethe's personality which necessitates his rejection of Indian plastic art and his acceptance of Greek art and it is the same law that he obeys when he greatly admires a certain group of Indian poems. Goethe felt himself attracted to the formulations of the Indian mind which remained close to reality, which did not fantastically distort natural form but revealed in it the sway of human divinity and divine humanity.

And this sense for the pure and naturally human, which is at the same time a genuine revelation of the highest powers, this sense, indeed so characteristic of Goethe, finds its confirmation in the works of Kalidasa, of the *Sakuntala*, and *Megha-Duta*, and in Yajadeva's *Gitagovinda*.

"Goethe cannot praise Kalidasa highly enough:

*Will ich die Blumen des frühen, die Früchte des späteren
Jahres,
Will ich, was reizt und entzückt, will ich, was sättigt und
nährt,
Will ich den Himmel, die Erde mit einem Namen be-
greifen,
Nenn' ich, Sakuntala, dich, und so ist alles gesagt."*

When Chézy had sent him the de luxe edition of the *Sakuntala*, Goethe thanked him with these words: "The first time that I became aware of this unfathomable work, it aroused such enthusiasm in me, attracted me in such a way that I could not cease studying it; indeed, I felt myself impelled to the impossible task of adapting it, even if only in part, for the German stage. Even though fruitless, still through this effort I have become so closely acquainted with the invaluable work, it had become so much part of myself, that for thirty years I have never glanced at either the English or German version . . . Only now do I realize the prodigious impression the work had formerly made upon me. Here the poet appears in his loftiest function, as representative of the most natural state, of the purest mode of life, of the worthiest majesty and contemplation of God."

What attracts Goethe so much, therefore, is the representation of "the most natural state," which here, however, is poetically elevated into the region of exalted humanity: "a most customary play of nature performed by means of Gods and their progeny." The same character as the *Sakuntala* is also possessed by Kalidasa's *Meghaduta*. The hero of the poem is a courtier who has been exiled from northern India into the south and who entrusts a cloud bound for the north with greetings to his wife whom he has left behind. He carefully describes the way which the cloud must take to reach his wife. Here, too, all the sentiments, all the motives, all the conditions are thoroughly human, and the semi-godly nature of the hero in all probability only serves to give more profound significance to what is portrayed.

And finally, we find the most human feelings, again experienced in a loftier sphere, in the third poem of Yajadeva's *Gita-govinda* which Goethe praised. The emergence of humanity and divinity becomes especially clear in this poem which deals with the love of the God, Krishna, for the shepherdess, Radha, their separation and reunion. The poem has rightly been compared to the Song of Solomon because it resembles it not only in subject and treatment, but above all in the mystical temper of its eroticism.

IV

The principle according to which Goethe made his selections from Indian culture was the principle of his own personality. He took cognizance of what was suitable for him and ignored what was not. The major chord of his being reechoes in his composite universe, and although individual components of this universe may originate in the Orient or the Occident, they are always Goethean in their final meaning. Contact with the world simply awakened and promoted the forces of his own being. What he experienced was basically of no great moment, for he experienced only himself in everything.

And so India, too, offered him nothing new. He found in her only a confirmation of himself. Kalidasa's words reflected his own manner of life in an Indian garb. That Goethe was aware of his self-oriented attitude, is shown by a letter to Count Uwarow who had founded an oriental society in Russia. Goethe says in reference to its activity: "A new world will have to spring up in which we can move with greater amplitude and strengthen and stimulate the new activity which is characteristic of our minds."

Among Goethe's works then, those of an Indian character are Indian only insofar as they are also Goethean. The subject matter for his ballads, *The God and Bajadere* and *The Pariah*, he found in Sonnerat's *Travels to East India and China*. The poems were not written until later, *The God and Bajadere* in 1797, *The Pariah* in final form not until 1824.

It is not difficult to prove that the ideas of both Indian ballads are characteristically Goethean, that they were such before Goethe became acquainted with Sonnerat. They belong to those years in which the close intimacy with Herder developed in Goethe the idea of humanity, when he worked on the stanzas of *Geheimnisse*. The happy consciousness of the goodness of human nature and the credulous trust in its triumphant, clarifying power had become ripe in him. In 1779, the first prose outline of *Iphigenia* had originated, a drama whose meaning Goethe expressed in the formula:

*Alle menschlichen Gebrechen
Sühnet reine Menschlichkeit.*

Here, too, the goodness and strength of a man frees Bajadere from the baseness of her kind:

*Der Göttliche lächelt: er sieht mit Freuden
Durch tiefes Verderben ein menschliches Herz.*

The primeval purity of Nature pervades the lost one and thus saves her. The idea of this legend is therefore thoroughly Goethean and not at all Indian. And its form, too, has undergone a transformation into the European

in two important particulars. Bajadere is, in a completely un-Indian fashion, conceived of as a Magdalene; furthermore, Goethe has the woman suffer death by fire, whereas the Indian fable has the stranger reveal himself as a God just at the moment that Bajadere is about to jump into the flames.

Evidences of Goethe's opinions on the doctrines of the *Pariah* can also be found during his Weimar years. In this poem, just as in *The God and Bajadere*, there is the sanctification of everything human. What these words proclaim:

*Ihm ist keiner der geringste . . .
Denn du lässt alle gelten . . .
Alle hast du neu geboren . . .*

already echoes in the letter to Charlotte von Stein of December 4, 1777: "On this dark journey (the Harzeise), how much have I come to love the class of people who are called low; they are most certainly the highest class for God!" One can trace this conception of the human even earlier; on the first of June, 1774, Goethe writes to Schönborn: "I became reacquainted on this occasion (a fire in the ghetto) with the common folk and was convinced over and over again that they are after all the best of all folk." And similarly, Werther finds "love, faithfulness, and passion in their greatest purity among the class of people that we call coarse and uneducated." Once again, therefore, it is demonstrated that Goethe brought no new conception of human nature to the Indian fable; it was nothing more for him than a new, welcome, symbolic form for something certainly known long before.

V

Goethe's relations to China are not as numerous as are his relations to India. To be sure, there is no period in his life in which something of the Chinese spirit did not in some way engage his attention, but he did not understand it significantly and fruitfully until his latter years. At a very early age, Chinese traits were brought to the young Goethe by the applied art of the Rococo period. In 1813, in the midst of threatening political chaos, Goethe seriously applied himself to the study of the Chinese Empire. He writes to Knebel that he has chosen this important country to flee there in case of necessity. Although the value of Chinese civilization is already known to him then, its study meant scarcely more than "Opium for the times" as he said to Luise Seidler. "If anything horribly threatening appeared in the political world, I obstinately flung myself upon what was most remote," he observes in the Annals of 1817. Throughout the following period, his interest in China is maintained, but subsequently, his work on the *Westöslicher Divan* directed him towards India. "I went through China and Japan very industriously a year ago," he writes to Schlosser in 1815, "and have become fairly well acquainted with those great countries."

In the autumn of 1817 the Far East draws him again. He reads the drama, *Lao seng öhrl*, and sends it to Knebel with the words: "Here is a Chinese drama that seems unpalatable at first but must be recognized as an extremely remarkable work after quiet reading and subsequent review." And in the essay, *Indische und Chinesische Dich-*

tung, he writes concerning it: "This is the genuine feeling of an aging man who is to die without a male heir, portrayed by the fact that, since he cannot completely forego the very beautiful ceremonies customarily decreed in honor of the dead, he must perforce leave them to unwilling and careless relatives. It is a rather characteristic family portrait, composed not in the particular but in the general." He compares it with Iffland's *Hagestolz*, "only that with the German everything proceeds from the mind or from the wretchedness of domestic and civic surroundings, whereas with the Chinese, in addition to these same motives, religious and obligatory ceremonies are involved." In this play, then, as with the Indian poems, it is again the "Truth and eternal presence" of the general human element upon which Goethe lays stress.

It was the gray-haired Goethe to whom the symbols of Chinese culture at last fully revealed their spirit. In 1827 he expresses himself to the effect "that one can still live, love, and write in this strangely-remarkable Kingdom in spite of all limitations." Besides the *Poems of One Hundred Beautiful Women*, about which he remarks in the periodical *Kunst und Altertum*, he reads that same year *Chinese Courtship in verse* by Peter Pering Thoms (Macao, 1824), and the novel *Ju-Kiao-Li ou les deux cousines* translated by Rémusat. Concerning these, he says to Eckermann: "These people think, act, and feel almost the way we do, and very soon you begin to feel like one of them, except that with them everything happens more clearly, more purely, and more morally. With them everything is logical, bourgeois, without great passion and poetic abandon and thus bears a strong resemblance to my

Herrmann und Dorothea as well as to the English novels of Richardson. On the other hand, there is a difference in that with the Chinese, external nature is always coexistent in proximity to human figures." China is now no longer dead matter for him, on the contrary, he senses the forces working within. And these forces are again those of the beautiful human being; he feels them alive within him and is now able in the *Chinesisch-Deutschen Jahres- und Tageszeiten* to resume the fusion of Orient and Occident which he finally perfected between himself and Hafiz in the *West-östlicher Divan*.

VI

The *West-östliche Divan* and the *Chinesisch-Deutschen Jahres- und Tageszeiten* coincide very strikingly in the tendency of their philosophy of life. In both, a value is placed upon that conduct of life which enjoys existence in wisdom. If in the *Hegire* we find these lines:

*Unter Lieben, Trinken, Singen
Soll dich Chisers Quell verjüngen*

it is because Goethe found in China a kingdom in which one could "live, love, and write;" correspondingly, the words in the Chinese poems are scarcely different from these in the *Divan*:

*Und am Wasser und im Grünen
Fröhlich trinken, geistig schreiben,
Schal' auf Schale, Zügen.*

What is Chinese in the *Jahres- und Tageszeiten* is inessential and minor. It is the German spring-time and Ger-

man landscapes that Goethe portrays, as he had experienced them in the beautiful May of 1827.

*"Mich ängstigt das Verfängliche
Im widrigen Geschwätz,
Wo nichts verharret, alles flieht,
Wo schon verschwunden, was man sieht
Und mich umfängt das bängliche,
Das graugestrickte Netz."
Getrost! Das Unvergängliche,
Es ist das ewige Gesetz,
Wonach die Ros' und Lilie blüht.*

Here the significance of the cycle is revealed: the quiet, trusting surrender to the most primitive, most encompassing orderliness, the entrance into the peaceful unity of encircling Nature. The fusion of man and Nature, and with that, the highest, self-issuing justification of untrammelled humanity is the metaphysical idea which the *Chinesisch-Deutschen Jahres- und Tageszeiten* express—or rather, were to express, since of course they remained only fragments and many of the last lines give the effect of precursory outlines, like notes which should sound as a single harmony, but instead only emerge singly.

VII

Two concepts, which are perhaps the clearest expression of Goethe's life philosophy: the trust in the benevolent necessity of Nature and the belief that even human nature is good when in harmony with universal nature, characterize the mood of the *Chinesisch-Deutschen Jahres-*

und Tageszeiten. Goethe did not transplant these ideas from the world of the Chinese spirit into his own; both were his property previously. As with the inclusion of India in his horizon and circle of ideas, here, too, is shown the original unity of his spiritual universe and the development of these ideas from his own psyche.

In Goethe's relationship to the Far East an example of the innate ideas of the personality is brought to light. Goethe borrows from the spirit of a foreign civilization nothing that he does not already possess; he recognizes it only where he finds himself and his mentality reflected in it. His universe is by and large completely individual; everything in it is specifically Goethean.

Translated by Maxim Newmark.

GOETHE AS SCIENTIST AND CRITIC

By J. G. ROBERTSON

GOETHE, ONE might say, was the last of those polyhistoric, Aristotelian geniuses who have been able to span with equal, unflagging enthusiasm all fields of human activity. No man whose main business in life was poetry has ever manifested so whole-hearted an interest in natural science, in art, and in politics as Goethe. There is, however, on the part of his critics an excusable tendency to regard Goethe with leniency in respect to these multi-form interests; to take seriously what in lesser mortals would be summarily dismissed as the merest dilettantism.

Goethe's self-judgment was, no doubt, not always correct; he had unfortunately—when we remember the claims it made on his time—an unreasonably high opinion of his talents in the fine arts; and he had also a higher opinion of his importance as a man of science than was justified by his achievements. And it is just in this field that he has been treated with what appears to be excessive indulgence.

There can be no question of the seriousness of Goethe's interest in the natural sciences; they formed the solid foundation for all his speculation, and his occupation with them was throughout his life more persistent than was that with poetry. Goethe's method of approaching such sciences as biology, optics and geology seems, however, strangely in antagonism with his methods in other

fields. Goethe's intellectual life was governed, as we have just seen, by a healthy principle of *a posteriori* reasoning; he progressed from fact to theory, a point that is nowhere more clearly brought out than in his correspondence and relations with Schiller, whose intellectual methods were purely *a priori*. But Goethe did not enter upon his most important scientific work in this spirit as the humble, unbiased investigator, but as the theorist who wished to see his theories substantiated. He may himself have believed that he was subordinating the hypothesis to the fact, using it merely as a scaffolding, and he has, no doubt, many wise things to say about observation and experiment being the only true bases of science; but the spirit of the time was too strong for him; and in the incubating period of modern science the hypothesis played, and rightly played, a great rôle. Goethe thus really approached science as the intuitive philosopher, and as the poet.

In biology, where his work has most significance, he was led to the problems by that holy reverence for nature, which had been instilled in him in early days by Rousseau and Rousseau's German apostles; he was inspired by the great idea of spiritual evolution, which, first dimly outlined by Vico, was expressed with suggestive force by Herder; and he applied the ideas of Herder, who was anything but a scientist, to the world of nature, which Rousseau had taught him to love. This nature was no mere collection of blind happenings, but one and indivisible, a manifestation of God, His "living garment," an organically developing phenomenon. Goethe sought continuity everywhere; and in his quest of continuity he lighted on two widely significant discoveries, both really arrived at by

a priori methods—the existence of a rudimentary intermaxillary bone in man, and what he called the "metamorphosis of plants," that is to say, the theory according to which the organs of a plant are all modifications of the leaf.

The success of these investigations was a little unfortunate, for it led Goethe to view his achievements with excessive self-confidence. He had made these discoveries alone and unaided; he was proud of them, and this pride engendered an overbearing sense of superiority to the other scientific workers of his time. Consequently he did not come into close touch with these, but only with philosophical scientists, like his friends in Jena, who were influenced by the metaphysical theories of Fichte and Schelling. This was naturally calculated to increase rather than counteract the *a priori* method with which he had set out. Had Goethe, in these years when he was most exclusively interested in science, worked in hearty coöperation with the French and English representatives of empirical scientific thinking and investigation, it would have prevented him from falling into the errors of his geological theories and his almost childish unwillingness to let the abstruseness of mathematics—one science to which his polyhistoric interest did not extend—come between him and the phenomena of light and colour.

As a scientific writer Goethe made his debut in 1784 with his paper on the intermaxillary bone; and in 1790 appeared his book on the *Metamorphosis of Plants*. The investigations which resulted in the latter treatise were undertaken in the first instance as a protest against the artificialities of the Linnean system. Linné had reduced the

plant-world to a mosaic, wanting in any organic ground-plan or binding principles. Goethe, starting from his preconceived view of nature as a harmonious whole, endeavoured to establish unity in the vegetable world; he conceived a kind of ideal "*Urpflanze*," from which theoretically all plants could be deduced. Branch, calyx, petal, stamen, fruit were so many different modifications of the simple leaf. This theory was doubtless an enormous step forward in the direction of evolutionary biology; and it was but a transference of it to the animal world when he applied a similar line of reasoning to the skeleton of mammals in his *Entwurf einer Einleitung in die vergleichende Anatomie* (1795): In place of the typical, symbolical plant, Goethe here saw the animal centred in the vertebral column, which throws out appendages, just as the stem throws out leaves; and, as at its highest point the stem bears flower and fruit, so the six uppermost vertebrae develop to form the crowning organ of the animal, its head.

It is not to be denied that in these morphological studies Goethe had at least a glimpse of that theory of organic evolution which Darwin was to establish a generation and more later. An aphorism like the following clearly foreshadows Darwinism: "Nature can attain to anything she sets out to achieve only by means of a gradual succession. She makes no leaps. She could not, for example, make a horse, if it had not been preceded by all other animals, as a kind of ladder by which she ascended to the structure of the horse." Or again: "Nature, in order to arrive at man, institutes a long prelude of beings and forms which are, it is true, deficient in a great deal that is essential to man. But in each is visible a tendency which points to the

next form above it." There is, however, a very material distinction between the reasoning that expresses itself in such a form and Darwinism. Goethe and Darwin approached the same problem from opposite sides. Goethe's conception of evolution was not based, like that of the English pioneers of the theory, on the synthesis of scientific investigations, but was rather a deduction from a theory, it was a mere corollary to his conception of the universe as a harmonious whole. The ideas went back through Herder to the old Leibnizean *Theodicée*, which put its stamp on the whole eighteenth century. Nature was not and could not be an enemy of man, "red in tooth and claw," as she appeared to an analytic, scientific age, but rather a great harmonious entity, into which it was man's highest privilege and happiness to fit himself.

Thus, although modern biology has arrived at conclusions towards which Goethe's speculations pointed, and although the modern scientist feels in sympathy with him and may even, like Haeckel, look to him as a pioneer of the theory of organic evolution, the fact remains that Goethe was not, and could not have been a scientist of the modern type; he arrived at his results by mental processes which modern science had discarded. He built up his ideas on a pantheistic philosophy and a fatalistic belief in the goodness of the universe; he saw in evolution the expression in nature, of the gradually unfolding mind of God working in the "loom of time"; whatever Goethe was, he was not, as he is often represented to be, a purely deductive thinker, with no thought for anything but the record of observation and experiment, no belief that went beyond the concrete.

The best proof that Goethe did not mean by evolution what Darwin meant, is to be seen in his blindness to the ultimate significance of the evolutionary theory for the natural sciences. Science in Goethe's day had, in fact, not yet progressed far enough on empiric lines to be able to avail itself of such a theory. The chief obstacle in his way lay in the fact that he was, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, limited by strict boundaries of the knowable and unknowable; the principle of arbitrary limitation, however healthy in the regulating of human conduct, is a serious bar to the furthering of science; here the mind which dogmatizes as to which problems are soluble and which are not, is lost. Thus, just as Goethe had little patience with psychological investigation, and only approved in a half-hearted way, or not at all, the preoccupation of his contemporaries with metaphysics, so he was prevented by his preconceived conclusions from giving his theory of organic development the wider application of which it was capable. There was clearly no room for an *Origin of Species* in an investigator who could say: "When the earth had arrived at a certain point of maturity . . . mankind arose everywhere where the soil permitted of it . . . to reflect on this, as has been done, I hold to be a useless occupation which we may leave to those who are fond of burying themselves with insoluble problems."

With Goethe's other scientific writings we need not take up much space; the zeal with which he prosecuted the study of geology is borne witness to by the fact that it overflowed into the Second Part of *Faust*. The geological world of those days was divided into two opposing camps, Vulcanists, who maintained that the earth's crust was the

product of igneous action, and Neptunists, who maintained the aqueous origin of the globe. Goethe belonged to the latter class, and again on purely *a priori* grounds; his adherence to this theory did not imply that he had reviewed and weighed the evidence, but merely that he could believe in no nature who proceeded with her work spasmodically or violently. Vulcanism implied cataclysms, and cataclysms were contrary to the smooth and harmonious working of the universe. That was all. Goethe's investigations into the science of optics, and more particularly the theory of colour, bulk largely among his scientific works. His history of the theory of colour is admirably written, and in the patient investigation and experimentation with colour, Goethe has approached more nearly than in his biological work to what we should nowadays regard as the proper attitude and method of the man of science towards his facts. But unfortunately his work in this province is marred by a quite unreasonable and unscientific antagonism to the Newtonian theory of light. Not that Goethe is necessarily wrong—among his defenders was a no less distinguished thinker than Schopenhauer—and Newton necessarily right; but before anyone has a right to proclaim an opponent wrong, he must follow him into all the intricacies of his proof. This Goethe did not, and—owing to his small mathematics—could not do; and so virtually on the basis of his own inaptitude for that science, he pronounced the mathematical investigation of the theory of light wrong.

II

In his critical appreciation of literature and art, Goethe was singled with the universalism and cosmopolitanism of

his epoch. In his youth, in those militant criticisms of the *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen* and elsewhere, he defended the ideas of the "Sturm und Drang" as formulated by men like Herder and Gerstenberg: the contempt for the rules, the rights of geniuses, and revolt against authority. In later life he turned with understanding to the products of a classic and even a pseudo-classic art. The Goethe who in his youth had overflowed in boundless enthusiasm for Shakespeare, translated in middle life the *Mahomet* and *Tancrede* of Voltaire for the Weimar stage, and pruned and purified in approved Gallic fashion the *Romeo and Juliet* of Shakespeare. But Goethe's later developments never entirely obscured his earlier judgments; the old principles remained even where a personal antipathy was involved. Thus we find him in later years speaking with admirable clearness and fairness of the writings of the Romantic School, and that at a time when he had but little sympathy for that school's tendencies. The few cases where Goethe's judgment played him false—in the case of Kleist, for example—are so exceptional that they only bring home to us anew how reliable his opinion in literature was. One antipathy, however, he brought with him from earlier years, an antipathy he could never overcome, namely, to the Middle Ages. The Middle Ages meant nothing to him personally; at most he could speak with a certain understanding and national pride, if without enthusiasm, of the *Nibelungenlied*; but the intellectual darkness, the lack of any sense of style, above all, the grotesque and tyrannous forms of medieval religious thought, were abhorrent to him; and in his eyes Dante, the one great "World-poet"

whose poetry could make no personal appeal to him, was still a medieval fact.

To one literature only did his allegiance never waver, the literature of Greece. Here he was the true heir of the century of humanitarianism. In Greece he found the fullest and most serene expression of the "Allgemein Menschliche" to which it is the highest problem of art and poetry to give visible form. Shakespeare came and went in his affections but in his allegiance to Homer he remained constant all his life long, from those early days of *Werthers Leiden*, when the pictures of Homer's world, as the ideal of spiritual health, were obscured, as his hero loses his mental tranquillity and balance, by the romantic mists of Ossian. Homer was his ideal in his classical period; and the next place in his affections belonged to the Greek Tragic poets, above all, Sophocles. Goethe was in the fullest sense of that often abused term a Hellenist; but his Hellenism never came into conflict with anti-Hellenism, at least not as it did in Heine's case. The antique world remained for him the most human and humane expression of man's aspirations. Time and again he insisted on the need of all true culture being based on that of Greece, and on the ancient tongues being the indispensable basis of all true education.

But, on the whole, there is comparatively little literary criticism in Goethe's works; he has written less in a systematic way about literature or its history than any other of the greater German poets. On the other hand, many volumes of his works are filled with his opinions on art. But here his views were distinctly narrower, partly because he had gone through no phases in art corresponding to the

"Sturm und Drang" unrest in literature; the enthusiasm for Gothic architecture in Strassburg, which in later life he repudiated, was never really incompatible with his classic tastes. Consequently the classicism of Winckelmann passed on in Goethe's mind unbroken into the classicism which he maintained in his own book on Winckelmann, in his *Propyläen* and in *Über Kunst und Altertum*. Goethe was a far less tolerant Hellenist in art than in literature. The plastic masterpieces of Greece, especially the Elgin Marbles, were to him the last word in artistic expression; and, as we have seen, when he went to Italy he followed virtually in the footsteps of Winckelmann. He had no eyes for anything but the antique; and Renaissance art only appealed to him in so far as it strove after classic imitation and classic excellence, a point of view which necessarily and in spite of much genuine admiration, led him to a quite false view of artists like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci; only in the case of Raphael does he seem disposed to make an exception. Raphael is not a "classic," but he stands on the heights of genius; before such a "re-born Greek," criticism must be dumb. Such being Goethe's standpoint one need have little surprise that the beginnings of a new romantic art in the early nineteenth century were abhorrent to him, and for the romantic "Nazarenertum" that sprang from the religious ecstasies of the first Romantic School, as for the literary expression of that attitude of mind, he was never weary of expressing his dislike.

GOETHE AND CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

By HARRY SLOCHOWER

THERE IS a double perspective from which historic personalities may be viewed: the timeless and the temporal. Essential insights are gained by a disclosure of the eternal aspect; yet, the category of time too, is intrinsic to human existence. This essay will attempt an evaluation of Goethe from this dual standpoint.

I

The most persistent impression connected with Goethe has borne the stamp of the Faustian character: an open-mouthed, heroic and intense striving. And, indeed, the first crucial occurrences in Goethe's life were of storm and stress quality. Escaping from the anacreontic atmosphere at Leipzig and stirred by a serious illness, Goethe came to Strassburg. Here, under the influence of Herder, Goethe discovered the great naturalists, Homer, Ossian, Shakespeare; and here, inspired by the love of Friederike Brion, the rich springs of Goethe's poetic genius welled up. At the same time, the swirling currents of Goethe's titanism begin to leap. Goethe proclaims unreserved reverence for mighty and heroic individualities. He creates Prometheus with his splendid defiance of ghostly gods and powers, with his staunch reliance on man's creative force:

"Here sit I, fashion men
In mine own image . . ."

This is the time when Goethe apotheosizes titanic figures such as Moses and Mohammed, Socrates and Caesar, when he conceives the theme for the greatest of all his titans, Faust. This period sees the creation of Goetz, portrayed as a powerful natural force. Goethe is here all for the outstanding personality whom he would place beyond good and evil. He himself flouts conventional standards and in Wetzlar courts Charlotte Buff, engaged to a friend of his. The Wetzlar-episode crystallized into *The Sorrows of the Young Werther*, a work that carried Goethe's name throughout the literary world. The simple story of a young man's futile love was here deepened to express a poetic longing for the infinitude of nature. Werther is consumed with the desire for the embrace of the All. The author's sympathies are altogether with this grand, young Gany-mede. His suicide is regarded as the inevitable act of a sensitive personality stifled by the conventionalities of a Pharisaical world. Goetz and Werther are two martyrs in the battle against Philistinism. The storm and stress blood of Goethe called for their sublime tragedy rather than for docile submission.

At the same time, it is misleading to regard Goethe's *Gestalt* as exhaustively characterized by such Promethian defiance. It was Goethe himself who felt the play of polar streams within him, who knew both the Tassos and the Antonios, the Fausts and the Mephistos, who realized "Two souls, alas, reside within my breast." Did his heart not beat to the simple love of Friederike and to the sophisti-

cated flirtations of Lilli? Was he not attracted to the maturity of Charlotte von Stein and to the primitiveness of Christiane Vulpius? In practice, he was both poet and statesman, sensualist and transcendentalist, thinker and doer. And his cultural message paid homage to Greece and the Orient, to paganism and Christianity.

Goethe of the pre-Weimar days is clearly ebullient and romantic. Soon, however, halcyon winds arose and although Goethe later occasionally reaches out for the Empyrean, the demoniacal in him is tamed and he finds the way toward the Greek idea of self-mastery and calm renunciation of the unattainable. To begin with, there was Goethe's position as state-official. For the first time in his life, Goethe was faced with problems other than those that obtain between individual and individual. For the first time social issues presented themselves. Gradually, Goethe became deeply conscious of the existence of an outside world that conditions, limits and determines the doings of the individual. Then there came into this remarkable life, Charlotte von Stein. Frau von Stein was seven years older than Goethe, a mother of eight children, reported to be cool, unsensual and unattractive. An interpretation of Goethe in terms of wilful romanticism cannot cast light on his great love for this woman. What did Charlotte von Stein mean to Goethe? It was the very calmness of her blood, the very serenity of her temper to which the dormant classicism of Goethe felt drawn. It was the very dispassionate nature of Frau von Stein which Goethe loved with passion. It was she who soothed the wild blood of the young storm and stress titan:

"Und in Deinen Engellarmen ruhte
Die zerstörte Brust sich wieder aus."

She was the Iphigenia who saves the distorted Orestes from overt acts, who points the way toward an inner harmony. Charlotte von Stein represents the second formative power in Goethe's classic development. The third was classicism itself.

In Weimar Goethe had begun to feel a propulsive interest in the Greeks. The form which the idea of limitation took in Weimar was prosaic and tainted by court-hypocrisy. In the works of the Hellenic period, in the sculpture of Phidias and Praxiteles, Goethe discovered that Greek wisdom which taught the necessity of restraint and the beauty of harmony. Clarity, definiteness, naturalness, Goethe found in Southern life and landscape. Greek art added serenity. Here were beauty and strength, achieved not by wild extremeness and in untamed passion but through measure and order. Here were "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur." The Greek law of Sophrosyne becomes Goethe's cherished maxim. Goethe clearly realized that it demanded continuous renunciation.

Tasso and *Iphigenie*, now cast into regular iambs, were the immediate precipitations of Goethe's classic persuasion. *Tasso*, to be sure, is a kind of Werther. But now Goethe has a deep understanding of the realistic Antonios as well, and the tragedy of Tasso, who is all inner life and egocentric perspective, now appears as both inevitable and right. Iphigenia fares well precisely because she is a kind of recovered Tasso. She respects the interests of King Thoas and is mindful of her duties toward him. She could,

by employing a ruse, herself escape together with Orestes and Pylades. She chooses to rest her case with the king himself and sails with Thoas' good wishes.

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* too, is ultimately an argument against capricious desiring. Wilhelm begins in youthful exuberance. He is fickle, unsteady and theatrical. He plays Hamlet well because he himself is Hamlet in his vacillations and dreamings. Later on Wilhelm becomes a member of the *Wanderbund*. This organization is pledged never to discuss the past or the future but to consider the issues of their day only; that is, they mean to steer clear of characteristic romantic escapes. Similar experiences urge upon Wilhelm the wisdom of giving up his catholic interests in favor of one particular activity. He learns: "It is best to restrict oneself to some trade." Wilhelm becomes a surgeon. There is a double symbol in this choice. Not only has Wilhelm's goal become definite; it has also assumed social form. *Wilhelm Meister* is an *Erziehungsroman*. It represents the development from vagrant individualism to practical social-mindedness. The sub-title of *The Travels* is *The Renunciants*. Renunciation already appeared in *The Apprenticeship*: "Man can not be happy before his infinite striving has set its own bounds." This leit-motif of the elder Goethe finds consummate expression in *Faust*.

Faust is the most magnificent testament of Goethe's life-work. It epitomizes Goethe's activities as man and artist. It pictures the most significant cultural currents of an entire century. And in the final analysis, it rises above the accidents of the time in which it was produced, bearing a message of perennial validity.

Faust's life has been spent in the monastic seclusion of

a Gothic study room. Although Faust is a learned man, he feels that he knows nothing, that is, nothing of that "which binds the world and guides its course." His has been the quest for the unconditioned Absolute and his initial cries of mental anguish arise because of the failure of the quest. Now at the close of the second part we meet a happily reconciled Faust. What is to account for this decisive change? Faust has *not* succeeded in unraveling the unknowable. The change is in Faust himself. He has learned that his early desire was futile and romantic and Faust's temper is now such that he can gladly resign himself to activity within the given limits of his nature. Faust had begun with a call for the Earth-Spirit and when faced with the fact that he was unequal to it, bitterly complained:

"Thou must renounce, renounce! That song
Is one which rings eternally . . ."

In the opening of the second part, Faust turns his back upon the infinite cataract of life; now he realizes that life can be experienced only through refracted particularity: "We have our life in the iridescence of the world." He is now satisfied that the vision of metaphysical essences is eternally barred.¹

Goethe's Faust is thus, in its profoundest essence, a mighty anti-romantic protest. Faust's unreasonable demand for that which is reserved for the Gods gives place to the wise recognition that such craving is fruitless. The

¹ Some critics have based their discussion of *Faust* on an examination of the first part only. A careful reading of the *Prologue in Heaven* should suffice as a warning against regarding Faust's story as ending with the seduction and death of Gretchen. The resolution of the Faustian problem is met only at the very end of the second part.

pantheistic aspiration of *Faust* I becomes specific activity in *Faust* II. The Faustian want to know and experience all received a reply in *The Apprenticeship*, as well: "Whoever desires to enjoy each and everything . . . will give his time to a striving which is eternally unappeasable." It becomes Goethe's firm conviction: "In limitation alone does the master reveal himself." Goethe's mature heroes have learned to select and know what is impossible.

II

One hundred years have elapsed since Goethe's death. Have historic developments since had no bearing on Goethe's message? There are the formal moments of Goethe's *Weltanschauung*: the magnificent call for active pursuits coupled with the insistence on the natural basis of ideal values and on man's restrictive radius. These are valid today as they were yesterday. Yet there is also the question of the specific subject matter. Since Goethe's death, the Western world has experienced 1848 and 1871, 1905 and 1914. The social problem is today most crucial. Has time proven irrelevant with respect to Goethe's insights?

Goethe's social nexus was, in the main, aristocratic. Goethe's mother, Elizabeth Textor, definitely belonged to the patricians of Frankfort and Goethe's father came from a rising upper middle class. Goethe's life never knew economic hardship or social ostracism. His being at one with the universe made possible some of the greatest nature and love poems in world literature; but it did not lead Goethe toward a realization of the social conflict. To be sure, Goethe did not remain in the rococo-decadence at

Leipzig; to be sure, Goethe became the leader of the storm and stress poets and wrote enthusiastically of political liberty in the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen*. But the freedom that he and his fellow "revolutionaries" demanded was freedom for the powerful personality only, freedom for the unrestrained expression of titanic moods and passions. These men were hardly interested in mass-movements. Their primary objective was not economic-political freedom but the liberation of the spirit (*Geist*). When Georg Foerster attempted to align himself with the French revolutionaries, he met with indifference and hostility. His stimulating writings were ignored, as were those of others, like Seume, who attempted to translate vague theory into definite practice.

Goethe's storm and stress drama *Goetz* draws on a large social world from the emperor to the gypsies. Yet the entire point of the drama is the justification of a genuine and powerful individual (*ganzer Kerl*). *Goetz* exhibits Rousseauan naturalism and this quality is contrasted with the rationalistic artificiality of court-life. Even in the early pre-Weimar version, *Goetz* never goes beyond the pale that would bring him in disrespect with the emperor; his is a revolution of an individual for individuals like himself. His ideal state is the passing system of knighthood. The historical *Goetz* was a robber knight who helped subdue the peasants' rebellion. This action on *Goetz*'s part appears as an honorable deed in Goethe's drama. *Goetz* does attack rich merchants but the emphasis throughout is that he is making war on a feeble, mechanized state. His rebellion is directed not against economic injustice, but primarily against bourgeois Philistinism.

With the call to Weimar, Goethe definitely rose above the social class he was born into. His revolutionary ardor gradually cooled. The state-duties that devolved on Goethe did impress him with the fact that the fullest development of the individual demands participation in the collective life. But Goethe did not seem vitally interested in initiating decisive reforms. "I shall manage the war department all right because I have no illusions and fancies there and do not want to create anything, only to know what is there and put it in order. So also with the highways." Goethe's *Egmont* is as much concerned with Klärchen as with lifting the Spanish rule from the Netherlands. *Egmont* stands by Philipp II throughout. Moreover, as a feudal landowner, *Egmont* had actually more in common with Philipp and his henchmen than he did with his own propertyless countrymen. Goethe barely indicates where *Egmont*'s economic interests naturally lay. Freedom for the Netherlands was ultimately won by the rank and file and not by the *Egmonts*. Goethe's central interest, however, is the demoniacal character of *Egmont* and not the social struggle of the masses.

It is in *Wilhelm Meister* and in *Faust* that Goethe's "socialistic" leanings are said to be evident.

After his individualistic oscillations (*Theatralische Sendung*), Wilhelm is sent out into the "world." Goethe's world was then predominantly feudal and class distinctions were deep and fixed. Not only do the nobles in *Wilhelm Meister* appear as the bearers of culture but it is also implied that the upper classes alone could feel and experience deeply. When Goethe came to write *The Travels*, the French Revolution had taken place and industrialism was

well on its way. Goethe had also dipped into Saint-Simon and Fourier, into Owen and Bentham and now Goethe could not take the nobility for a symbolic embodiment of an active realism. Wilhelm Meister ends by becoming a physician. Yet seen clearly, the symbolism in *The Travels* has less of a social and economic than it has an ethical character. The uncle in *The Travels* believes in "private property and communal ownership" (*Besitz und Gemeingut*). And as explained, this means holding on to private possessions while allowing the masses some measure of the profits. "One must be an egoist, hold on, in order to be able 'to give.'" There is nothing of socialism in this or in Wilhelm's practice of surgery. The uncle's heroes are humanitarians such as Beccaria and Filangieri. This social program knows nothing of the fundamental basis of economic class-distinction and is, in fact, not far removed from eighteenth century humanitarianism.

"Let man be noble
Helpful and good!"

The same general humane polity marks the essence of Faust's social message. Faust has won shore marches by aiding an unjust cause of the emperor. Dykes and canals are built by magic and piracy is practiced. In the course of these ventures, an old couple, Philemon and Baucis, lose home and life. These are almost criminal acts. Still, Faust's workers are winning land back from the sea. And it is Faust's last happy visualization that in eons to come, wastes will be reclaimed from the ocean on which human beings can build homes. This is the extent of the social program offered in *Faust*.

The French Revolution had no counterpart in German history. And in literature, the storm and stress writers were, as suggested, revolutionaries of *Geist* only. Goethe himself turned against the French Revolution in a number of works (*Gross-Cophta*, *Bürgergeneral*, *Die Aufgeregten*, *Campagna in Frankreich*). From the time when Goethe conceived the idea of the eternal *Urpflanze* in Palermo, he regarded revolutions as manifesting the principle of chaos and formlessness. Goethe was an evolutionist in politics as well as in biology and he was a Neptunist in geology. If in *Herrmann and Dorothea*, Goethe grants a place to the idea of rebellion, he does so in fear that a permanent sedentary state may result in the stultification of *Geist*.

As a poet of responsibility, Goethe could not hold to the individualism and aestheticism characteristic of the early romanticists and of Schiller. The tendencies of the nineteenth century urged Goethe on toward considering the collectivistic demands of the day. But there was Goethe's aristocratic heritage; there was the feudal milieu in which Goethe spent almost sixty years of his life. Goethe's social message remained grounded in a general humanitarianism (*Allgemein-Menschliches*). It is the human element that interests him in Tasso's life at court; that is the emphatic note in his *Humanitätsdrama Iphigenia*. Nor did Goethe go the full way even here. He never believed that equal opportunity be extended to all. Indeed, the masses were to the elder Goethe a term of abuse. In the manner of his contemporaries, he regarded the economic status of the masses as a just corollary of their cultural inferiority. Social forces, were to Goethe, represented not in the "people" but in great personages. The break-up of feudal-

ism were, to him, Goetz and Egmont; the Renaissance meant Raphael and Cellini; the French Revolution did not take on full significance for Goethe until he met Napoleon.

III

The permanent poetic appeal that the second part of *Faust* has, issues from the Helena-act. Faust's desire for union with Helen, purports to indicate the Mignon-longing of the North for the South. As Helen embraces Faust, her material body vanishes and Faust is left with Helen's mantle and veil. He is told:

"Hold fast what now alone remains to thee!

The garment let not go!

'T will bear thee swift from all things mean and low
To ether high, so long thou canst endure."

Goethe's deep-reaching symbolism in this scene is directed toward revealing what the Nordic present cannot and what it can retain from the classic past. What is necessarily and irretrievably lost is the specific historic content. The attempt to assimilate the past in substance results in fantastic offsprings, in the Euphorions, who lack a center of gravity and end in disaster. Time has forever carried away the subject matter that constituted Greece. Yet something of this non-recurrent past still remains, namely: the Greek sense of form. And it is precisely this ancient "how" that is needed to sustain the modern "what." Germanic fervor is to be wed to Hellenic calm. Northern turbulence is to be held in check by Southern moderation.

Ultimate justice demands that Goethe's own contributions be considered from such symbolic perspective. The living substance of Goethe does not lie in his accidental message. If today we can still regard Goethe significant, it is because, after translating his insights into our language, we find his general approach fruitful.

There is the Faustian thirst for experience: an ever-valuable impulse directed against nun-like, dried and shy conservatism. It reminds of the vast open, adventurous world, changing and changeable.

But this drive of the spirit, we are reminded, is limited by both the existence of matter and of chance. Throughout, Goethe insists on the material basis of ideal values. Homunculus (*Faust II*) is all spirit; to be "born," he must acquire a body. Faust is weaned from the traditional belief in an after-world, immaterial existence. Goethe's idealism thrives on naturalistic ground.

The recognition of the efficacy of brute matter and of the existence of Tyche brought with it the realization that a life of reason demands constant renunciation. This renunciation, however, is not in the interests of a resigned "taking things as they come." In the organic realm there operates for Goethe the principle of *Steigerung* which makes for growth and development. Self-contained composure is prevented by the Faustian drive into the blue ether, by the drawing power of the "eternally feminine." Much has been said in criticism of this romantic leap, so indigenous to German character. Still, do not great creations owe their inception and their final consummation to some such daring thrust? Does not this temper prevent

heroic activity from dissipating into lethargic acceptance? Does it not assure an upward direction?

Then we have Goethe's anti-atomic conviction. The inner necessity of his own personality offered Goethe the clue to his morphological method. Goethe's organic viewpoint regards the whole as more than a summary of its parts and sees the parts as determined by the structure of the whole. This is a startling anticipation of the modern *Gestalt*-theory which is proving of extraordinary value in such diverse fields as logic and sociology.

There is Goethe's principle of polarity today in vogue with leading thinkers in America and Europe. It saves Goethe from romantic extremeness; it makes him balance the Tassos by the Antonios. It is the same concept that prevents Goethe from ignoring the particular in favor of the universal. In his studies of the natural sciences, Goethe seeks to discover cosmic laws. But, unlike the mathematical naturalist, he is dissatisfied with any general concept that does not pictorially embrace particular phenomena. Goethe's *Urtypus* aims to be a concrete universal.

Finally, there is Goethe's anti-teleologic approach. Goethe regarded "personalities" only, as organically determined. With respect to nature and history, Goethe denied the workings of some dark Moira or inscrutable Providence. Clearly did Goethe realize that the traditional view leads to an acceptance of the universe, in the form of a fruitless, meditative resignation. Goethe's world is not fixed or tucked away in some teleological heaven. His conception of truth is pragmatic: "Only that which is fruitful, is true." He further urged: "It is not enough to know, we must also apply." Goethe's message calls for an active

pursuit of values, or for experience at its highest and best. While it reminds man of his eternal and inevitable limitations, it emphasizes that God's heaven lies within man's natural horizon: "If you want to reach the infinite, traverse the finite to all sides." It is the great challenge to that romanticism which Goethe lived and outlived. It is an answer to the romantic waves which arose after Goethe's death, to the extremeness of Strindberg, to Ibsen's escape in life-illusions, to the primitive Easternism of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and their following. Goethe has thus become the prophet and the inspiration of those scattered and isolated writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of Hebbel and Nietzsche, of Richard Dehmel and Thomas Mann, who stand for the forces of life and reason. Goethe's *Gestalt* is a living battle-cry against the sentimentalism, pathology and romantic individualism in contemporary letters, thought and politics.

Five days before his death, Goethe wrote to Wilhelm von Humboldt: "The animals are instructed by their organs, the ancients said; I add: men also, but they have the advantage in that they instruct their organs in turn." One hundred years later, the foremost American thinker defended this thesis in a volume called "Philosophy and Civilization." But he translated it into a social idiom. Himself, Goethe was entire: poet and investigator, artist and scientist—a representative human being. That which is transient marks the limitation of this great personality. What he said of man in his eternal status seems of permanent value.

